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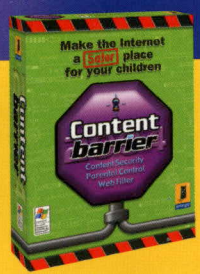
COOL KIT: TAKE BETTER DIGITAL SNAPS WITH OLYMPUS' LATEST DIGICAM P110

KILLER APP: KEEP CHILDREN SAFE WHILE THEY SURF WITH CONTENT BARRIER P117



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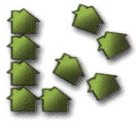

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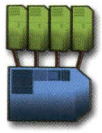

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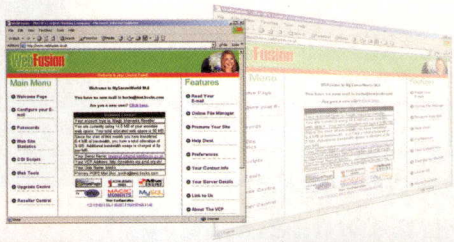

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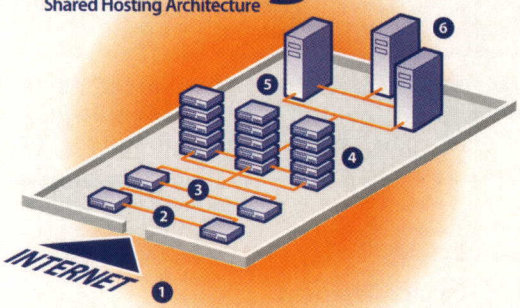

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Welcome

IN DEFERENCE TO OUR ISP AWARDS, THE *PI* TEAM TELL US THEIR BEST EVER PRIZE

James Thornton
Features Editor

"I once won an inflatable referee from a Web site for writing some hilariously witty prose about referees. This may be the best prize anybody has ever won."

Mark Billen
Staff Writer

"When I was about four I went to a Pontins holiday camp. They got all the kiddies on stage and I won a matchbox car for claiming I was actually eight."

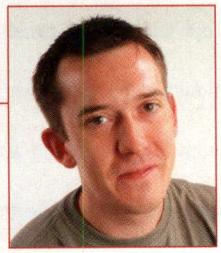
Colleen Johnson
Sub Editor

"I once won a play-writing competition when I dashed off something very quickly – but whenever I spent ages perfecting my entry I never got anywhere!"

Nicky Bartlett
Senior Designer

"I won a huge goody bag of sweeties and a Sindy doll when I was six years old for having the prettiest plaits at Butlins in Minehead. That was kinda cool!"

Matt Budd
Multimedia Editor



"I won a fetching 'Jack Daniels' T-shirt at a Student Union party. I think they might have been trying to tell me I'd had too much to drink."

Editor's welcome

Winning an award is a great feeling. Admit it – the last time somebody gave you a prize for your talents, you probably tried to act all calm and coy about the whole thing, but inside your heart was fluttering like a baby butterfly in the autumn wind.

This is why awards are great – offer anybody a prize that tells them they're wonderful, and they'll love it to bits. That's why our ISP Awards this month should warm the cockles of your heart – we're giving out prizes for every type of ISP there is. It's well worth checking out to see if your chosen ISP has romped home with a prize, then you can revel in the glory like you'd won it yourself. As ever, you're bound to disagree with some of our choices, so please get in touch to let us know what you think.

Elsewhere in the mag this month, we're looking at 50 amazing programs that will enable you to save a whole load of time and hassle. And I can personally vouch for a load of the programs mentioned – much of the list came from my Start menu at home.

We also sent one of our writers on a secret mission to turn ten quid of his own money into something a whole lot more impressive. See how he got on in our feature starting on page 28. (I'll give you a clue, if you follow his tips, you could be a few hundred quid up).

Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson, Editor
thomas@paragon.co.uk

PRACTICAL INTERNET: YOUR GUARANTEE OF VALUE

Why we're the number one Net magazine for:

In-depth features
Each issue of *Practical Internet* contains detailed features on the latest Net topics, brought to you by our team of leading writers. We cover a variety of subjects every month to ensure that you get the complete picture. Our comprehensive news section brings you the latest Internet developments in an unbiased and impartial style.

Expert help
Practical Internet is devoted to making your life as hassle-free as possible, with dedicated sections for Web design and browsing help. With more workshops than our rivals, we aim to keep you up to date with the latest techniques. What's more, our workshops are only written by experts, so you can expect excellent results every time.

Independent advice
We realise how important value for money is, so we provide impartial buying advice every month in our reviews section and buyers' guides. We also provide regular ISP round-ups, in addition to money-saving features to keep you informed of the best deals around – and to ensure you carry on getting the best from the Net for less.

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Issue 84

Practical internet

Essentials

08 News
Find out what's hot in the Internet world, including more bad news for file sharers

14 iCandy
Get your laughing gear around the latest collection of must-have cool kit

17 Backchat
Check out what your fellow readers have to say. Surprise, surprise, you're not happy about spam

72 Subscriptions
Discover how to save yourself a bundle of cash

75 Freedom2surf competition
Win yourself free broadband for a year

93 Your Business Online
Top advice for anyone starting their own online firm, including a guide to trading abroad

107 4D Business Kit competition
See how you can win one of three Business Starter kits from 4D, worth a cool £1,200

122 Disc contents
Our guide shows how to use your disc properly

128 Buyers' guide
Pick the perfect ISP from our listings

146 Web's most wanted
Yet more horror home pages from the depths of design hell...

20 2003 UK ISP awards
See which ISPs romp home with a coveted PI trophy in our annual roundup of the state of play regarding the Internet Service Provider market in the UK

Web browsing

77 We take the Net by the scruff of the neck with our section dedicated to bringing you the best of the Web and showing you a multitude of ways that you can make the Internet work for you

Web browsing
Find it now
Find it now:
Superheroes
heroes
"The Hulk makes Mike Tyson look like a member of the school chess team"

78 We showcase ten of the best superhero sites on the Web, ranging from the expected heroics of Superman to the slightly more tenuous Superted

80 Take control of your digital music collection with our great compendium of hints and tips

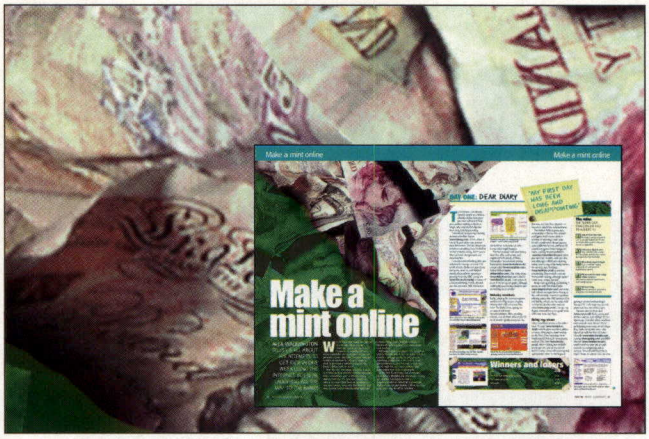
82 Enjoy better instant messaging with our guide to the excellent new MSN Messenger 6

84 Rid your life of those monotonous mouse clicks by allowing Internet Macros to do it all for you

86 Access newsgroups as they were meant to be accessed with a little bit of help from NewsBin

88 Danny McAleer banishes your browsing banana skins to the bin in this month's Q&A section

Contents



28 **Make a mint on the Net**
The premise is simple: we gave Alex Waddington a tenner, and one week to turn this into as much dosh as possible. Find out what he recommends in our money-making extravaganza

36 **Top 50 time-saving programs**
We reveal the 50 top programs you need to have on your machine to save you valuable time on the Net

Reviews

109 We put the impressively low-priced Olympus mju 400 digicam through its paces, and also give you the full rundown on all the latest software and hardware

Webmaster

45 **27 pages of Web design**
Give your Web-building skills a boost with our section devoted to bringing you the latest and greatest design techniques

46 Discover how designing for all computers will benefit you in the long run

48 Optimise your images, improve your graphics and boost your logos with our Web graphics tips

50 We show you how to create cool rollovers and image maps all within the confines of Dreamweaver MX

54 Turn your site into a multimedia superstar with the help of the amazing Dreamweaver MX and Flash MX

58 We show you how to build your own PC server in the second of our three-part tutorial

62 Turn even the most complicated of documents into PDFs with the help of the new Adobe Acrobat 6

64 Build a message board in the penultimate part of our ASP tutorial

66 Keep in touch with your customers by creating your own mailing list using PHP and MySQL

68 James Seabright takes time out from performing at the Edinburgh Festival just to help you lucky readers. Awww, isn't that nice?

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEB GRAPHICS WITH OUR TIPS – SEE PAGE 48
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO BUILD STUNNING SITES
Webmaster
IN-DEPTH FEATURES
STEP-BY-STEP WORKSHOPS
HAND-CODING MASTERCLASS
WELCOME...
What's inside...
Advanced
Dreamweaver MX special
BUILD INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS AND INCORPORATE VIDEO ON YOUR SITE WITH DREAMWEAVER – PAGE 50
Also in Webmaster this issue...

News

All the latest Web sites, products and services

Online file sharers could face prison

RECORDING INDUSTRY FIGHTS DIRTY WHILE MICHAEL JACKSON SPEAKS OUT IN FAVOUR OF FILE SWAPPERS

PEOPLE WHO DOWNLOAD songs from the Net using peer-to-peer file-sharing clients could soon be thrown in jail. That's what will happen if proposed changes to US copyright law get the green light.

In an effort to get tough on online music piracy, Democrats John Conyers and Howard Berman have proposed legislation that would make it a crime to trade as little as one file over the Internet.

The Authors, Consumers and Computer Owners Protection Act of 2003 carries penalties of up to five years in jail, plus a fine of up to £160,000 for uploading a copyrighted file using a P2P client such as KaZaA, Morpheus or Grokster.

House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member John Conyers said: "While existing laws have been useful in stemming this problem, they simply do not go far enough."

However, many observers, including those from within the recording industry, believe that imprisonment is too harsh a punishment. Even the Prince of Pop, Michael Jackson, has spoken out against the wacko proposals.

"I am speechless about the idea of putting music fans in jail for downloading music," the moonwalking pop legend declared in a statement.

"It is wrong to illegally download, but the answer cannot be jail."

Clamping down

The US record industry has already stepped up its efforts to deal with file sharers, and its campaign of forcing ISPs to name and shame people who download illegally is now in full swing.

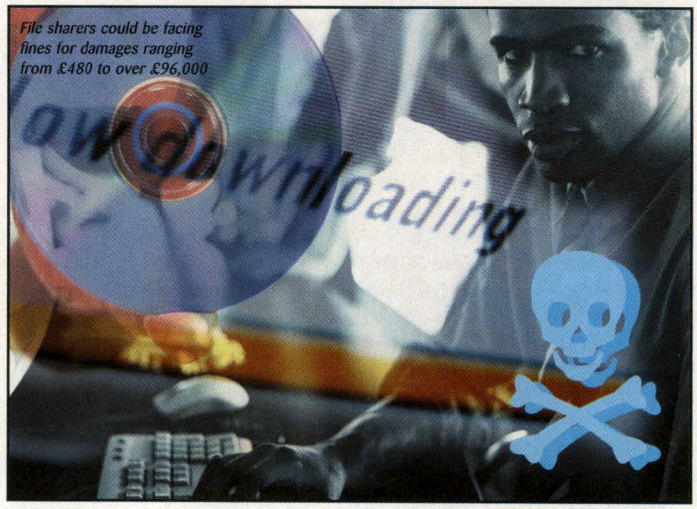
The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) has already won over 900 subpoenas to identify Net users who share music online. The organisation originally said it would target users who had uploaded many songs, but some of the subpoenas filed recently cited as few as five representative songs. The RIAA has yet to say how many songs would justify a lawsuit, which could result in fines for damages ranging from £480 to £96,100.

> **"COPYRIGHT LAW IS OUT OF STEP WITH THE VIEWS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND MUSIC DISTRIBUTION ONLINE"** SHARI STEELE

File sharers fight back

Meanwhile, online music swappers are being urged to campaign for changes to copyright law in an effort to avert the threat of being sued.

The American lobby group, The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has launched its 'Let the Music Play' campaign in a bid to persuade America's 60 million or so file sharers to push for artist royalties and legal status for file sharing.



File sharers could be facing fines for damages ranging from £480 to over £96,000

"Copyright law is out of step with the views of the American public and the reality of music distribution online," said EFF executive director Shari Steele.

"Rather than trying to sue people into submission, we need to find a better alternative that gets artists paid while making file sharing legal."

The EFF's lawyer added: "Today, more US citizens use file-sharing software than voted for President Bush. Congress needs to spend less time listening to record industry lobbyists and more time listening to the more than 60 million Americans who use file-sharing software today."

Pirate CD sales top one billion

MUSIC INDUSTRY THREATS APPEAR TO BE FALLING ON DEAF EARS

DESPITE THE BEST efforts of the recording industry, the number of illegal CDs sold worldwide continues to grow.

According to a report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), the illegal music market is now worth $4.6 billion (£2.8 billion) worldwide, after the number of pirate CDs sold globally topped the one billion mark for the first time. The organisation believes that two out every five CDs or cassettes sold are illegal, and claims that much of this money is used to support organised crime gangs.

"This is a major, major commercial activity, involving huge amounts of pirated CDs," said Jay Berman, chairman of the IFPI.

"What we have faced in the last three years is an explosion worldwide in the number of unlicensed optical disc plants."

shorts

➔ Those who register 'sucks.com' domain names could face writs for trademark infringement. It comes after the owner of nextelsucks.org received legal threats from the Nextel Corporation. This represents a grey area in the allocation of URLs, and a decision on this and other cases is pending.

➔ A group of five Texan men have been charged with criminal mischief for butchering a tree. Local police caught up with them after one of the party posted snaps of the incident on his home page, and each could now receive a two-year sentence.

Got a news story?
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Email: jamest@paragon.co.uk

BT being tight

UK TELECOM REGULATOR ORDERS THE COMPANY TO SLASH ITS CHARGES FOR INTERNET ACCESS FOLLOWING INVESTIGATION

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY into BT's rates for wholesale Internet access has ruled in favour of a 17 percent reduction.

Oftel has discovered that the communications giant was billing operators for call services relating to dial-up access which were no longer required. Improvements in 2001 stopped BT from having to use its own network types for handling dial-up provisions, but it continued to charge accordingly.

The subsequent cuts could now be passed on to consumers if ISPs such as Freeserve and AOL benefit from possible savings. Broadband users will remain unaffected however, but as Jupiter Research analyst Ian Fogg told the BBC: "Cheaper unmetered dial-up

BT wholesale

products could slow the growth of broadband if they are passed on to consumers."

Brian Ahern of The Internet Service Providers Association has also warned dial-up customers not to expect too much: "It is not guaranteed that they will pass it on to the ISPs. Because of the high level of competition in the UK, they have been operating at very low margins for some time."

Despite claims from an AOL spokesman that their consumers would notice a reduction, it was stressed that changes would be kept to a minimum: "We're talking pennies. Over the space of a year the most you'll see is a couple of pounds."

Connie but not forgotten

THE FACE OF AOL'S UK AD CAMPAIGNS GETS KILLED OFF IN FAVOUR OF NEW ARTY PROMOS

AOL'S LOVE AFFAIR with Connie the virtual Web assistant has finally come to an end after five years.

The squeaky clean, bowl-haired character played by model Rachel Willis has been axed in the ISP's promotion of Version 8. Originally intended as a prim and proper icon for those customers just embarking on the Net, she also provided a 'safe' image for concerned parents.

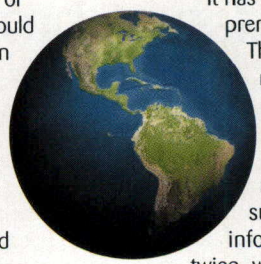
However, public feeling for the creation, traditionally frocked in HTML, has dipped considerably since its inception in 1998, when first greeted by scathing industrial criticism. Consequently, AOL has deemed the idea outdated and will continue to replace it with marketing it sees befitting the modern user.

Third world Web

A NEW INITIATIVE PLANS TO OFFER COST-EFFECTIVE TRAWLING FOR THIRD WORLD INTERNET USERS

WEB USERS IN poorer or developing countries could soon be given their own search engine.

Developers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are working on a system that will allow people to gain more from slow and expensive connections.



The TEK engine works by emailing a search request to a Boston-based server. It is here where the query is processed, with all the matching Web pages compressed and returned the next day. This would enable users to download the content once and examine it offline.

It has been designed on the premise that people in the Third World have little money but much time, while those in the West are a total contrast.

The software will also keep a record of submitted requests so information is not sent twice, while a stringent filtering of useful sites will also preserve bandwidth.

Star wares

ONLINE BOUNTY HUNTERS GET A HEAD START AS IN-GAME ITEMS FROM THE MOST ANTICIPATED MULTIPLAYER GAME POP UP ON EBAY

STAR WARS GALAXIES may have been operational for only a matter of months, but already some eager players are sensing a money-making opportunity.

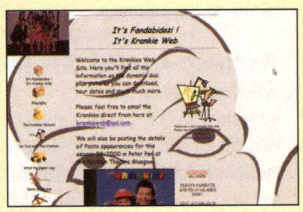
Auction sites have been inundated with virtual items from the gaming world, including currency, raw materials and fully fledged characters. Bidders are being asked to stump up as much as £340 for £500,000 worth of Star Wars credits if they want to fast-track their integration into the virtual universe. Feeling is that with a relative few able to offer such goods, it could take some time for the real world market to settle down.

It remains to be seen whether operators Sony/Verant step in after taking similar action over popular role-player, EverQuest.

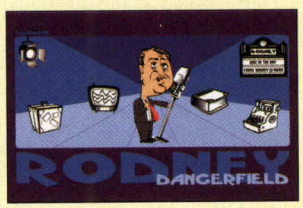
Star struck

PRACTICAL INTERNET GOES BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ASSORTED GROWN-UPS WHO LIKE A GOOD UNIFORM

AC/DC
www.ac-dc.net
No adult sports a blazer and shorts quite like AC/DC's duck-walking, fuzzy-haired guitarist Angus Young. He started with the band when he was only a nipper, and this official site hails the stadium rock gods.



The Krankies
www.thekrankies.cwc.net
Just when you thought little Jimmy Krankie was nothing more than a bizarre dream, you stumble across the official home page. There's news of what the duo are up to these days and some assorted photos of them in panto.



Rodney Dangerfield
www.rodney.com
We just love the Rodney Dangerfield site, so he's always worth a mention, however tenuous. The funny man of course starred in comedic romp 'Back To School', and this impressive site features flash animations, jokes and funny sound clips. ➔

News shorts

→ Musical polyphonic ring tones could soon be replaced with the screeching tones of an ostrich or guillemot. The British Library has opened its archive of wildlife noises to the service, including pigs and cattle, with ring tone companies expecting a successful September launch.

→ Yahoo is celebrating ten years of Internet cafes by picking the world's best. Awards will go to the most stylish, unusual and remote, plus a category for the one serving the best food. Interested nominees must apply with contact details and provide a 500-word endorsement.

NEW Software

FIND OUT ABOUT THE LATEST AND GREATEST SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

Macromedia Contribute 2

www.macromedia.com

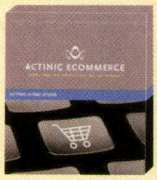
This latest package looks to take all the trouble out of maintaining and updating your Web site. Now compatible with Mac OS X, the software enables you to simply browse the pages you wish to edit, make the changes and then publish immediately. It also provides a host of new features for Windows and Mac platforms, including SFTP support with drag-and-drop Paypal integration for rapid eCommerce.

£69.99

Actinic Audio Store

www.actinic.co.uk

Whether you're a struggling busker or a major recording artist, Actinic might just have the answer for you. Based on the popular series of Catalog products, Audio Store enables anyone to build a Web site to sell their CDs, sheet music and so on. In fact, you can turn yourself into a one-man memoribilia fest by selling t-shirts, MP3s and more. With built-in PayPal processing, you should be raking in the dosh in no time.



£199.99

DVD Xpress

www.adstech.com

Burning home movies onto DVD might be all the rage, but how do you get your DIY flicks to your machine and looking great? DVD Xpress offers professional-looking results from any analog or digital source, with support for converting to MPEG. There are full editing utilities, VHS optimisation tools and impressive features for adding menu graphics to your discs.

£99.99

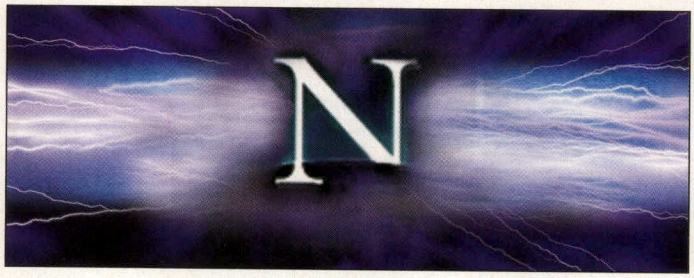
→ Netscape scrapped

IT MAY BE IE'S BIGGEST ADVERSARY, BUT THE BROWSER COULD BE DOOMED AS ITS OWNERS DECIDE TO SHELVE PLANS FOR FUTURE VERSIONS

PARENT COMPANY AOL has announced that work on any new versions of Netscape will cease, following cuts in development staff.

Many of its 50-strong team have now migrated to the Mozilla Foundation, although AOL insists that the Netscape brand and support for previous editions will remain.

Founded in 1994 after work at the University of Illinois, Netscape won considerable public support with its policy of free distribution. It could also be said that although others are attributed with defining the original Internet protocols, browsers like Netscape and Mosaic were largely responsible for bringing the technology to the people. Commercial success quickly followed over the next few years, with Netscape enjoying one of the most successful US stock market debuts of all time.



It may have enjoyed a hugely successful stock market debut, but Netscape's days are numbered

AOL later acquired the company in 1998, although the browser was already suffering at the hands of Internet Explorer. Microsoft's baby currently commands a staggering 96 percent of the market share following its initiative to package the browser with Windows – a statistic that has actually led AOL to develop its online tools around IE.

Netscape's fate was then further compounded after its core code was offered to Mozilla for work on its own development projects.

The Mozilla project had suffered setbacks in its first four years after primarily marketing its product at developers. It now boasts a mere 1.2 percent of the market, but has since left IE behind with its range of additional features.

"We've got the better browser," claims Mozilla's president Mitchell Baker, "and that's what really matters."

AOL seems to echo these sentiments by pledging allegiance to Mozilla, confirming that in addition to aids in staffing it will provide domain names, property rights and $2m (£1.24m) towards the pending launch.

Playstation browser

CONSOLE HACKER PROVIDES ONLINE BROWSER FOR SONY'S BIG BLACK BOX

PLAYSTATION 2 HAS been transformed into an all-singing, all-dancing Web crawler.

Little-known enthusiast Martyn Brook has discovered that tweaking the machine's network adapter will enable a connection to any IP address. The console can then be directed to any Internet site rather than just those dedicated to Sony's online gaming service.

By embedding a browser into a Web site, his 'Brookfresh' home page has subsequently received impressive levels of traffic from players worldwide. It works by inserting an address bar above each viewed page, and is fully compatible with the PS2's joypad or USB keyboard. Users simply need to enter the IP into the device's setup software to get started, although differences in configuration make American support more difficult.

Similarly, it remains to be seen how the news might possibly conflict with Sony's own plans for the broadband multiplayer network.

"It's a bit of a hack really," confessed Martyn, who hopes to continue by providing bookmarking facilities and email capabilities some time soon.

Stat attack

Top ten PC games

WHAT'S PRESSING GAMERS' BUTTONS AT AMAZON.CO.UK THIS MONTH?

1. Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne Expansion Pack £14.99
2. Neverwinter Nights: The Shadow of Undrentide Exp. Pack £14.99
3. The Sims: Superstar £14.99
4. Half-Life 2 £24.99
5. The Sims: Deluxe Edition £25.99
6. Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness £22.49
7. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City £22.99
8. Morrowind: Bloodmoon Expansion Pack £14.99
9. Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004 – A Century of Flight £44.99
10. Championship Manager 4 £24.99

→

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standards upto V90 & 64k ISDN
Online account management
via secure control panel
VISIT: www.v21.co.uk or call the sign up hotline on:
0800 089 21 21

News

shorts

→ UK homes are wasting approximately £1bn a year on Web access. This is the finding of Myinternetpass, who studied Oftel and Census figures to calculate staggering regional losses on Net connections. It's thought households could save as much as 300 percent just by switching their ISP.

→ Lycos has supposedly conducted a 'study' into mobile picture messaging – by taking a sneaky peek at people's cheeky snaps. Their new Zap site even features charts of risqué images and attempts to highlight the naughtier elements behind the current MMS craze.

Net watch

INTERNET FREEDOM'S **CHRIS ELLISON** MONITORS THE LATEST ONLINE DEVELOPMENTS

BACK IN JULY, **www.defacers-challenge.com** announced a contest in which hackers were invited to deface as many sites as possible during a forthcoming six-hour time slot. Points would be awarded for the number and type of servers they infiltrated (Windows 1, Unix 2, Macs 5). The winner would be the group that defaced 6,000 servers in the shortest time. The apparent prize, apart from notoriety, would be 500Mb of free data storage and free email.

Concern quickly grew in cyber-security organisations that the contest would disable thousands of sites and chaos would ensue.

"THESE DAYS IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO UNLEASH ALL MANNER OF FEARS ON THE COMMUNITY"

Internet Security Systems (ISS) produced a media release warning: "due to the large scope of the contest, normal Internet activity could be disrupted." Security Web site Zone-H.org, an archive of defacements, reported that it had evidence that hackers were preparing their attacks and expected 20-30,000 defacements. Before the day of the contest, the FBI shut down the site containing the announcement – and the cyber community awaited the attacks.

On the day, things turned out very differently. The large US and EU ISP Via Networks reported no incidents. All the Web's best known sites like Yahoo and Amazon were untouched. Reports from Zone-H reported 300 defacements, but nothing near to their predictions. As Graham Clusley, spokesman for UK security firm Sophos put it: "It seems to be a damp squib."

It appears that these days it doesn't take much to unleash all manner of fears on the community.

*Internet Freedom can be contacted on **campaign@netfreedom.org**. The campaign's Web site is at **www.netfreedom.org***

MPs blog off

THE INTERNET COULD SOON BECOME A HIVE OF POLITICAL DEBATE IF THE GROWING TREND IN PARLIAMENTARY BLOGGING CONTINUES

ENTHUSIASTIC WEB LOGGERS have rallied round the House of Commons in order to bring politicians on board.

They believe encouragement given to American senators and congressman should follow here, providing a useful forum for discussion. Online think tank Voxpolitics chaired a recent meeting on the initiative and found the interest overwhelming. As director James Crabtree explained: "A blogging generation will be interested in an MP who blogs, because they themselves run blogs."

Many feel this would make an often inaccessible political system more open, while allowing the distribution of undiluted opinion. However, only a few politicians currently provide blogs, with Leeds Councillor Stuart Bruce the first local adopter. Viewers are able to chronicle his daily life in the job, with constituents and potential voters kept aware of his efforts. "I try to be as frank and open as possible," he says, "because that's the only way that people will believe in it and return to it regularly."

Westminster's Tom Watson, who has gained notoriety for his comedic blogs, is another exception. The use of mock street-slang and ironic jive talking has resulted in large levels of traffic, sparking both laughter and derision: "Tom's well up on the Interwebnet, and he won't harsh your buzz or dis you down the line." Although Tom does maintain that the stunt is part of a more serious agenda: "If you got a critical mass of MPs on there, you could start having genuine online debates."

Will it catch on in Westminster? 'Blair's blog' does have rather a nice ring to it...

Hoax of the month

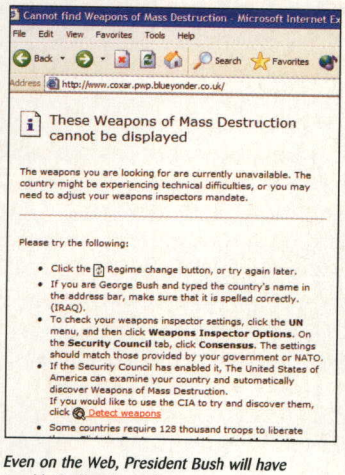
TERRORISTS COULD GET MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR WHEN THEY GO SHOPPING FOR THEIR WEAPONS ON THE WEB

ANYBODY CASUALLY BROWSING the Net for 'weapons of mass destruction' recently will have had a hilarious result.

Entering the phrase into Google.com's search bar and clicking the 'I'm Feeling Lucky' button displays an error page with a difference. What appears to be IE's standard problem page for unloaded URLs is actually a cheeky imitation that pokes fun at the Bush administration. As well as declaring that the weapons cannot be found, it goes on to suggest the adjustment of 'Your Weapons Inspectors Mandate' or the clicking of the 'Regime Change Button'.

One of the funniest bits is where the page tells the President to check his spelling of 'IRAQ' and for Donald Rumsfeld to click the 'provided bomb'.

The source of the hoax hasn't been revealed, although the site, dubbed 'The Iraqi Explorer', does provide links to an external Weapons of Mass Destruction site selling T-shirts and mugs.


Cannot find Weapons of Mass Destruction - Microsoft Internet Ex

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Search Favorites

Address http://www.coxar.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/

These Weapons of Mass Destruction cannot be displayed

The weapons you are looking for are currently unavailable. The country might be experiencing technical difficulties, or you may need to adjust your weapons inspectors mandate.

Please try the following:

- Click the Regime change button, or try again later.
- If you are George Bush and typed the country's name in the address bar, make sure that it is spelled correctly. (IRAQ).
- To check your weapons inspector settings, click the **UN** menu, and then click **Weapons Inspector Options**. On the **Security Council** tab, click **Consensus**. The settings should match those provided by your government or NATO.
- If the Security Council has enabled it, The United States of America can examine your country and automatically discover Weapons of Mass Destruction.
  If you would like to use the CIA to try and discover them, click Detect weapons
- Some countries require 128 thousand troops to liberate

Even on the Web, President Bush will have trouble finding those elusive weapons

Kidney for sale

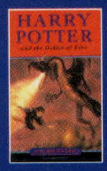
JUDGES RULE THE OFFERING OF VITAL ORGANS ON INTERNET AUCTIONS FAR TOO UNSAVOURY

AN AUSTRIAN MAN has been given a four-month suspended sentence and a fine of 2,000 euros for attempting to flog a kidney.

Advertised as a 'blood purification organ', the eager seller had hoped to receive bids in excess of the 66,500 euro reserve. However, the steep price for the 48-year-old's organ failed to attract takers, with cheaper and healthier Third World donors apparently available.

He later expressed relief in retaining the kidney and explained that the money was needed to revive his girlfriend's business.

→ The official Chinese launch of the latest Harry Potter novel has been pre-empted by online fans. Publishers are scared about the impact on sales but cannot stop the material being posted on billboards. The translations remain crude however, so any tales of 'Larry Cocker' could yet face legal action.



→ A band of Internet boffins have taken Web surfing to its logical home – the beach. The seaside town of Brighton now has a wireless network so holidaymakers can get connected in the sun. 'PiertoPier' is free to anyone with the capabilities and relies on donations for funding.

Traditionally, newspaper dotcoms omit exclusive features being run in the printed version

Bye-bye broadsheets

THE DAYS OF ACCESSING ONLINE BROADSHEETS FOR NOTHING LOOK NUMBERED AS SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES TAKE OVER

THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER has become the last UK broadsheet to implement facilities that charge surfers for accessing certain elements.

This represents a significant watershed in the provisions of free universal distribution, although the paper insists breaking stories and archives will remain available to all. It comes after a real dilemma for electronic newspapers, with precious little to offer Web visitors aside from current affairs. With the Internet perfect for publishing breaking events, electronic agencies find the supplement of free fresh stories pivotal in maintaining interest.

In turn, a compromise has to be introduced to make money and ensure that people keep buying the printed equivalents. Traditionally, newspaper dotcoms have achieved this by asking users to stump up for historic material, and omitting exclusive features being run in the daily publication.

The Guardian's annual charges will concentrate on email digests at £12.50, digital offline versions for £98.57 and ad-free services of £20.

PCs porn again

HACKERS ARE POUNCING ON SUSCEPTIBLE BROADBAND USERS TO TRANSFORM THEIR MACHINES INTO SMUTTY SERVERS

WEB PORNOGRAPHERS ARE anonymously hiding behind the terminals of blissfully unaware users, it has been revealed.

An estimated 1,000 machines have been attacked by hackers, believed to be Russian, allowing potentially illegal material to be distributed without trace.

Those with speedy connections have been most targeted, and captured computers are used to broadcast fraudulent adverts. These dodgy pop-ups recommend explicit domains to randy surfers and covertly snatch their bank details when attempting to register.

This makes tracing the criminal activity almost impossible because the scheme cannot be located to one central server. It's also thought that victims are less likely to report the problem if attempting to download incriminating content. Employed hackers receive payment for their trouble and it is thought that the majority of recruits have links with the Soviet's criminal underworld. Richard Smith, a computer researcher studying the cases, told the New York Times: "We're dealing with someone here who is very clever."

An estimated 1,000 machines have been secretly attacked by Web pornographers

Crowd trouble

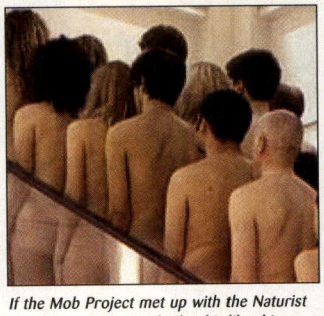
CRAZY WEBBERS POST INVITATIONS TO STAGE MASSIVE GATHERINGS OUTSIDE THE BIG APPLE'S MAJOR TOURIST LANDMARKS

NEW YORK CITY has recently been witnessing spontaneous public collectives arranged by email.

Gigantic 'mobs' have been sighted since June and have congregated in places as diverse as Macy's department store, Grand Central Station and the mezzanine of the Grand Hyatt hotel. Anyone interested is told to set their watches for initiating synchronised behaviour such as applause, and to wait within a series of Manhattan bars. With future meetings planned, the Mob Project as it was originally termed, is actually an artistic movement that has since been exploited for charitable and purely social purposes.

"It's just about doing something fun," says David Danzig, who is not only a willing participant but also vice-president of Charge.com. "I get the impression that it's a performance art piece."

However, the trend looks set to catch on, with similar activity scheduled worldwide – and it has drawn surprising support from the authorities who consider it a good way to socialise through the Web.



If the Mob Project met up with the Naturist Society, it might just look a bit like this

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An open and shut case

This revamped version of Ricoh's Caplio G3 promises to be the sharpest shooter around, boasting the world's fastest shutter response time for a digital camera. The 3.24 megapixel digital zoom device is now encased in a sleek die-cast magnesium body and comes with an internal image memo function for organising photos into folders within the camera, before transferring them to your PC.

Product: Ricoh Caplio G3 S
URL: www.ricohpmmc.com
Telephone: 0208 261 4031

£249.99

Product: NEC e808Y
URL: www.nec.co.uk
Telephone: 0845 200 2040

£449

Qwert on camera

During the Eighties everyone dreamed of owning one of those giant mobile phones that would only pick up a reception every second Wednesday if you leaned out of the bathroom window and wiggled it about a bit. These days cellphones are slightly more advanced, and this latest 3G handset from NEC comes with two built-in cameras for video calls and capturing still and video images, plus a full QWERTY keyboard and email client.

You drive me crazy

If you're like Eric Bristow, Bobby George and Colin Monk, and you won't settle for anything less than one huunnnndred and eiiiighty, then VTEC's latest portable hard drive could be right up your street. The V-Disk3 provides a whopping 180Gb of storage space on a single compact device, allowing you to transfer and back up file upon file of data via its speedy USB 2.0 interface.

Product: VTEC V-Disk3
URL: www.vtec.co.uk
Telephone: N/A

£372.82

Joy ride

If Buck Rogers were to choose an MP3 player, BenQ's latest device would surely feature highly in his thinking. The futuristic-looking Joybee 120 boasts support for the 21st Century's hottest music formats MP3 and WMA, and also comes with voice recording, FM recording, language learning and USB flash drive capabilities. There's 120Mb of internal storage space and even an FM radio for Buck's mate Twiki to catch the football scores.

Product: BenQ Joybee
URL: www.benQ.co.uk
Telephone: 01442 301000

£109.49

Shock to the system

It might look like just another swanky hi-fi, but the Systemax Encore hides an interesting secret – it's a PC. The device promises to act as a central point for everything you do at home, combining high-spec PC performance with a television and DVD-based home cinema and a music centre that functions independently of the PC.

Product: Systemax Encore
URL: www.simply.co.uk
Telephone: 0870 727 2160

£1,209.08

Product: Plextor PX-780A
URL: www.plextor.com
Telephone: 0870 429 3010

£233.82

Record breaker

After deciding to call it a day on its production of CD-writers, Plextor has wasted no time in tarting up its DVD recording range. The company claims that the PX-708A is the fastest dual format DVD-recorder on the block, writing DVDs at a speed of 8x and CDs at 40x. The drive also comes with a bumper software bundle, including video-editing and authoring programs to turn your movie star dreams into a reality.

DVD dreams

As DVD burning continues to increase in popularity (for backup purposes only, of course), more and more hardware manufacturers are getting in on the act. TEAC's first multifunctional DVD burner is designed to make the process of recording your own DVDs all the more comfortable. Compatible with the myriad of current standards, the device boasts 4x DVD+-R, 2x DVD-RW, 2.4x DVD+RW, 16x CD-R and 10x CD-RW capabilities.

Product: TEAC DV-W50D Kit
URL: www.teac.de
Telephone: N/A

£206.31

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* this package is only available on annual contract

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- SSL
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- Live Stats
- Frontpage server extensions

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RESELLER Package

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- POP3/SMTP email & web-mail
- Live Stats
- Frontpage server extensions

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£450 pa. Annual contract 2 months FREE with no set up fee

ENTERPRISE Package

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- SSL
- POP3/SMTP email & web-mail
- Live Stats

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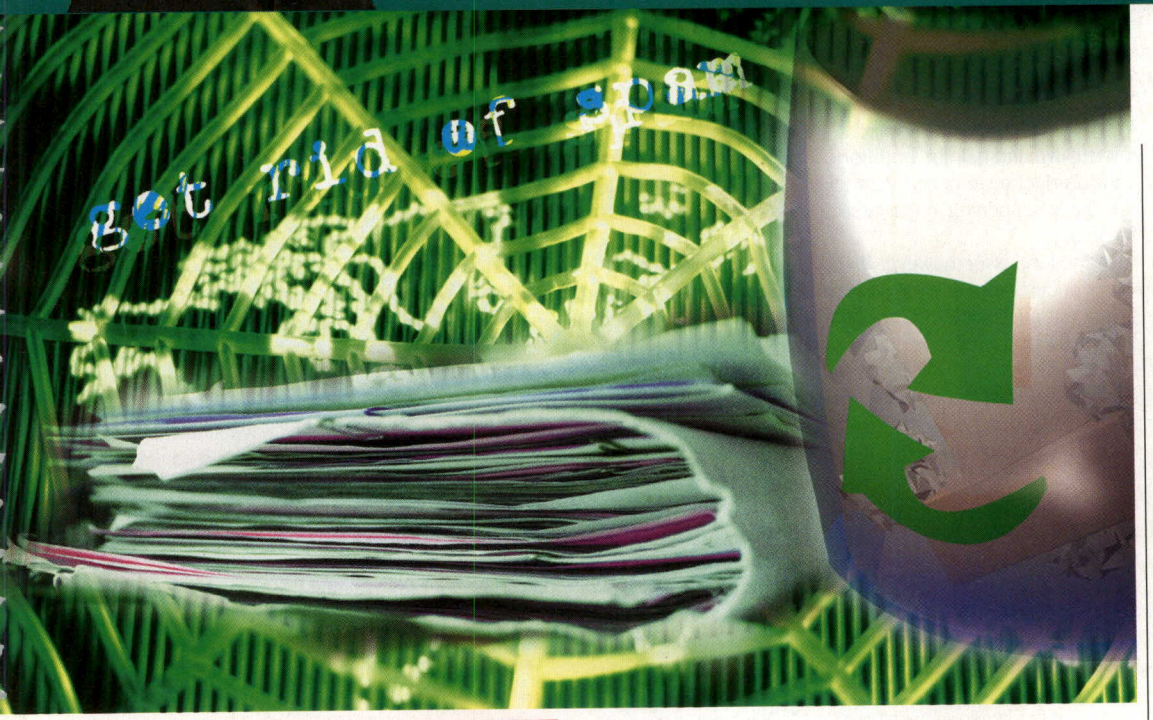


LETTER OF THE MONTH

Can the spam

LIKE, ONE CAN imagine, just about all *PI* readers I am greatly troubled by spam – despite never (knowingly!) giving out my main (Blueyonder) email address. For two years, I was spared spam on Blueyonder. Then a couple of unsolicited messages started appearing, and the trickle is slowly starting to turn into a flood. But it's nowhere as bad as the Demon account I've had for nearly ten years – which often rewards me with no fewer than 150 unwanted junk messages a day for cheap bank loans, mail-order Russian brides, penis enlargement, get-rich schemes, fake Viagra and other rubbish for the gullible or desperate.

But there is a simple solution. One, in fact, that's so simple that even Bill Gates – who has recently complained to Congress on the problem of spam – hasn't thought of it. And here it is. Most of the idiots who spam to get their message across use bulk-mail CDs, which contain nothing more than massive lists of email addresses. One could argue that the sale and use of such products should be made illegal worldwide, but that's another story.

These lists appear to be organised by ISP (look at the outgoing-address field of spam, and you'll often see an alphabetically organised list of respondents with the same domain). So why don't the ISPs introduce a system whereby a message is deleted at the mail-server end if it has been sent to more than, say, ten per cent of its subscribers? Unless such messages are status messages generated by the ISP, they are clearly junk. Can you think of any legitimate third-party mailing lists that attract ten per cent of an entire subscriber base (even if you could, the ISP could use a filter to let those messages through).

This doesn't directly solve the problem of the bandwidth that spam wastes, but the knowledge that their messages are being deleted before they can get through would be a powerful incentive not to bother wasting their time. Okay, they might attempt to get around the problem by sending out batches of smaller mail shots. But most spammers are by their very nature lazy get-rich-quick opportunists, and so probably won't bother.

Martin Pipe

We asked Nick Truman, Head of Internet Security at BTOpenworld, what he thought of Martin's anti-spam idea and he replied: "If only life were that simple that we could delete bulk emails. Unfortunately the law does not allow us to intercept emails at their point of entry with our servers to identify whether they are spam or not. Effectively this is called interception, and arguably, if one were permitted to do so, other agencies more interested in other activities like the prevention of terrorism or child abuse, would expect us to intercept communications, looking for the telltale signs that they are interested in.

However, there is nothing to stop an ISP using an automated system like BT's Brightmail that uses a set or rules to best guess as to whether a communication is spam or not.

Spammers harvest email accounts from servers. Unfortunately the very process by which a person legitimately sends email can also be misused to test a service for valid accounts. Quite simply, the harvesting software connects to a mail server and initiates a communication saying 'hello server, I want to send an email to nick@talk21.com' and the server replies 'okay' or 'sorry no such user'. If the answer is 'okay', the software logs that address and moves on to nick1, nick2, nick3 etc. These are then burnt to CD and sold. Believe me – no ISP would condone such an activity because it costs an ISP resource in bandwidth, computing power and capacity to accommodate spam.

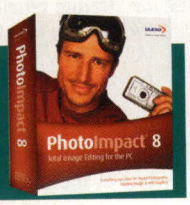
Part of the answer is for internet users to:

1. Use email addresses that are very difficult for harvesting/spamming software to guess.
2. Not hit the 'Opt out' button/option on every spam they receive or even worse, reply, as this just validates your email address.
3. When posting to the Internet disguise your address like nick@nospam.talk21.com. Any legitimate emailer will remove the 'nospam', but automated email collectors that trawl newsgroups and Web sites will fail.
4. Report spam to the abuse department of the originating ISP. This will be identified by the IP address in the header. Don't simply forward to the abuse department of the email address that the spam purports to come from, as this will most definitely be fake."

WIN A PRIZE

Not only do you get the immense satisfaction of having your letter printed in the UK's fastest growing Internet magazine, but every month one of our letter writers wins a great prize. Yes, if you write in to us at the address above, you stand a chance of winning a copy of PhotoImpact 8, Ulead's envelope-pushing graphics package.

We reviewed PhotoImpact 8 in Issue 74, and loved it so much that we awarded it the coveted *Practical Internet* Star Buy award. Worth a cool £89.99, this is one of the best image manipulation programs around. To find out more about PhotoImpact 8, pop along to www.ulead.co.uk or phone 01327 844755.

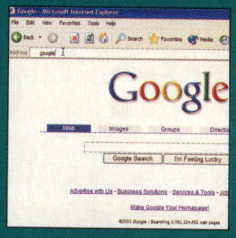


Reader's tip

The URL of sandwich

As the owner of my own business, my time is precious and I simply cannot afford to spend all day typing long Web addresses into my browser. Luckily, I've come across a great little shortcut that saves me having to ponce about entering the full address of the sites I visit. Simply enter the name of the site you're visiting (say 'Google') then hold down CTRL and press 'Enter'. The 'www.' and '.com' prefix and suffix will then automatically be added to the URL.

Martin Richards



Your letters

Dream on

I THINK *PRACTICAL INTERNET* is very helpful, but please can we have more articles on basic Web construction. Everyone raves about Dreamweaver MX and to the professional it's probably the best Web editor available, but if you buy all the ancillary applications you will not have much change from £1,000.

I was recently requested to develop a Web site for a charity. We cannot afford this sort of money so I searched the Web and finally came up with some freeware which enabled me to construct a reasonable site. Okay, it may not have all the bells and whistles of some of the more glamorous sites, but who needs that when we are simply trying to impart information on a regular basis to our users? This exercise has enabled me to learn basic HTML and to import a few JavaScripts, and because the Web editor is not WYSIWYG I have leant a lot more. No doubt my education will continue, but I am pleased that I was forced through economic reasons to take the trouble to learn HTML even though I had many false starts and headaches!

Mike Claydon

Glad you find the mag useful, Mike. The reason we do so many Dreamweaver workshops is that it's the tool of choice for many seasoned Web designers and is generally regarded as the best Web editor. Nevertheless, it's good to see you mastering the art of hand coding instead of taking the easy way out.

Search and destroy

I enjoy your magazine and find it informative and helpful, both for your product reviews and your take on what's happening in the Internet these days.

In the June issue however, I was very concerned to see your writer giving out misguided information. On page 51 you state: "A cunning tip is to put a block of keywords in small type and set the link colour the same as the background colour, so they appear invisible on the page." In the early days of search engine marketing this approach was adopted by many less than ethical search engine optimisation companies, and it worked quite well until the search engines smartened up. Nowadays, adopting this strategy is likely to get your IP address banned from many search engines.

Most of the larger engines have improved their algorithmic spiders substantially in the last few years and they are constantly on the lookout for practices that might be considered spamming. This is one of the top unethical methods on their list. People like Google in particular are very successful at catching this type of approach, and as I'm sure most of your readers would not want to be banned by one of the largest search engines in the world, you might want to let them know that this is not a method.

To get your site listed well on search engines, content is king. Creating themed pages around specific content is a lot more effective than trying tricks to get better placement. The search engines are looking for the same content your users are looking for and the success of your Web site will depend on whether they find you a valuable enough resource to keep coming back to.

Mary O'Brien

You're not the first person to raise this point Mary, and we held our hands up last issue admitting that we shouldn't have condoned spamming tactics in the mag, as it could land you in very hot water with big search engines. You'll be pleased to hear that we've included a tutorial on submitting to search engines manually on page 102, which should help you score more visitors without resorting to underhand methods.

Korea opportunities

Thanks to your informative accessibility article in Issue 81 (June 2003), I began to think how I could apply some of the techniques to my own Korean translation Web site at **www.koreng.co.uk**.

An obvious way to start was to address Alt tags. I tried putting some meaningful text into the Alt tags attached to the image site links. When previewing in IE, sure enough, I see the text. However, checking in Mozilla I didn't see any tooltip-type text. On further investigation on the Internet, I find that IE is wrong and Mozilla is right. What should happen is Alt="text" is used as alternative text if the image is not found; while Title="text" is used as a pop-up tooltip. When I put in both tags, IE and Mozilla display the Title text when I hover my cursor over the image links. Note the Title tag applied to images is not the same as the TITLE header meta tag.

Mike Tooley

Thanks for clearing that one up Mike – it's good to see someone recognising the importance of making a site accessible for all, and of course that includes making a site available on a variety of browsers. Good luck with the site.

Attachment of the month

This is one of the cheesiest email gags we've seen in a while but we love it to bits. We're sure that if Tom Cruise saw this, he would admit that the little fella here could teach him a thing or two. Edam well would! Thanks to Tony Butler for sending us the daring rodent who'll do anything for a nibble of cheese.

Have you picked up a hilarious or strange email attachment? Would you like to share it with your fellow *Practical Internet* readers? Send it to pi@paragon.co.uk with the subject header 'Attachment of the month'. We'll print the best one in the mag each month.

hw=wh

(hostway is web hosting)

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domain names | **virtual hosting** | dedicated servers

All plans are available on Windows or Linux.

30 day money-back guarantee...

KEY FEATURES	SiteControl 3 Control Panel	Disk Space (Mb)	Monthly Traffic (Gb)	POP3/E-mail Accounts	Web-Based Mail Interface	Unlimited Aliases	E-mail Forwarding	PHP4/ASP3 Scripting	Perl5 Active CGI	XML Support	Frontpage Extensions	Real Media Professional	Windows Media Server 8	LINUX FEATURES MySQL Data Area	WINDOWS FEATURES Access Database(s)	MS SQL Database(s)	MONTHLY FEE (excl VAT)
SILVER	Yes	100	1	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	0	0	0	£8.95
GOLD	Yes	200	4	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	1	1	0	£14.95
GOLD PLUS	Yes	200	6	30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	1	2	0	£19.95
PLATINUM	Yes	500	10	50	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	2	2	1	£49.95
PLATINUM PLUS	Yes	500	15	100	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	2	1	£89.95

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Hostway are consistently at the forefront of research & design in hosting technologies, with all systems, applications and tools written in-house, as they have always been. Importantly though, we pride ourselves not only on the performance and reliability of our hosting products, but also on our commitment to bringing an efficient, human face to everything we do, whether it be customer service, technical support or sales advice.

So when you're next looking for the **right** host to fulfil your requirements, the decision might not be as complicated as you think.

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2003 UK ISP AWARDS

AS INTERNET ACCESS IN THE UK COMES OF AGE, GETTING HOOKED UP IS CHEAPER, QUICKER AND EASIER. WE ROUND UP THE ISP SUCCESS STORIES OF THE YEAR SO FAR AND EXPLORE THE STATE OF THE MARKET TO HELP YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT ONE

What a difference a year makes, especially in the world of Internet access. This time last year the ISP market was in a state of transition. Service providers were inching away from their dial-up roots in an effort to persuade the public to switch to faster connections, unmetered access prices were creeping up and Net users were generally confused about where their best options lay.

On top of this, BT was being slammed for not rolling out ADSL more quickly, as thousands of people itching to enter the new world of broadband lost out through not living in the right part of the UK. The broadband market was blighted further by fly-by-night ISPs who made price promises they couldn't keep, wranglings over how much ISPs should pay for the right to rent

"Prices have tumbled in both the dial-up and broadband markets"

DSL lines from BT, and the fact that content providers had yet to deliver a formula to tempt anyone other than hardcore Net users into splashing out on a fat pipe.

Twelve months on and the picture is much prettier. Prices have tumbled in both the dial-up and broadband markets, more people can receive ADSL, and mobile Internet technology is burgeoning. As a result, if you're fed up with your existing Net access setup there's never been a better time to make the switch.

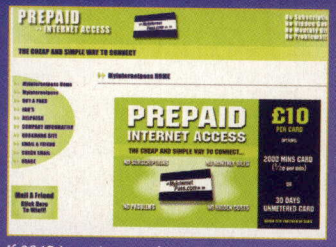
We round up the current state of dial-up and broadband access in the UK, and salute the cream of the crop in our very own *PI* 2003 UK ISP awards.

0845 Pay-as-you-go

DESPITE ALL THE hype surrounding broadband, dial-up access is still number one in the eyes of most Internet users in Britain, and by some distance too. According to recent Oftel figures, there are now 8.77 million people dialling into the Net using a 56Kb modem, and the majority of these connect through a good-old-fashioned pay-as-you-go 0845 number.

The last year has seen ISPs increasingly keen to move users away from this method of paying for Internet access, largely owing to the fact that they can make a steadier buck from people who take out a subscription-based service rather than one where users just pay for the calls they make.

In most cases it's not just the service providers who come up trumps when people upgrade to an unmetered service, and making the switch often proves to be a sound financial investment on the part of the user. In fact, pre-paid UK ISP Myinternetpass (**www.myinternetpass.co.uk**) estimates that Britons are chucking around £1 billion a year down the dunny when connecting to the Internet, with the average home paying £217 a year accessing the Net. Not surprisingly, the company points out that if these customers plumped for its pre-paid card-based system they would save a packet, as each £10 card provides 2,000 minutes of dial-up action.



If 0845 is getting you down, MyInternetPass, with its subscription model, should help you out

Difficult to please? How does Euphony's unlimited free Web space and emails sound?

Star performers

Features: i12 (www.i12.com)

Value: NTL (www.ntl.com)

Customer service: Waitrose (www.waitrose.net)

Overall: Tiscali

With a gamut of free gifts and a high quality service to boot, Tiscali scoops our 0845 award

Nevertheless, the pay-as-you-go approach is still a winner for newcomers to the Net or those who only need a primitive connection for checking email or very light surfing. The range of services available is still the biggest of any Internet access model, although after a period of consolidation some of the smaller ISPs have been gulped up by the bigger fish.

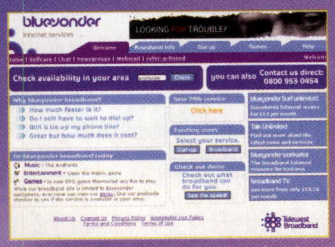
Choose carefully

It's easy to think that 0845 services are all much of a muchness, but there are some distinct things to watch out for when you're making your selection, and you can find huge differences in the quality of service or features offered by ISPs.

For instance, if you're looking for a bit of friendly, helpful advice when your connection is playing up, many ISPs will charge you more for their time than a sideshow fortune teller. If you don't fancy forking out the £1 per minute or so that some helplines command, the pay-as-you go deals from the likes of Waitrose (**www.waitrose.com**) and Blueyonder (**www.blueyonder.co.uk**) will be right up your street. Both ISPs offer friendly, reliable freephone tech support services for dial-up customers, making them ideal for Internet newcomers.

Another thing to look out for when deciding where to sign up for 0845 access is the extra features and benefits that the service offers over and above basic Internet access. Unfortunately, the days when ISPs such as Free-PC.com gave away entire PC systems for signing up are far behind us, but many ISPs offer a bundle of decent freebies. Providers such as Freeola (**www.freeola.net**) and Euphony (**www.euphony.net**) offer unlimited email addresses and Web space, which isn't bad when you consider that you're not paying an outright charge for the connection.

Waitrose is one of only a few 0845 ISPs to offer free tech support, which can't be a bad thing



Like its Waitrose chum, Blueyonder's freephone tech support has swayed punters to sign up

Freeola & GetDotted
Five BIG Reasons to move over to Freeola!
1. Freeola UK Dial up
2. Freeola BT Broadband ADSL
3. Get Dotted Domain Names
4. Freeola 1000: FREE Addresses

Freeola is one of a gamut of 0845 ISPs clamouring for the biggest share of the Net pie

i12's offer of a massive 800Mb of free Web space should be enough for anyone

Most popular ISPs

FIGURES COME FROM ISPREVIEW.CO.UK

Rank	ISP	UK Subscribers
1	Freeserve	2.6 million
2	AOL UK	2.2 million
3	BTOpenworld	1.78 million
4	Tiscali	1.4 million
5	NTL	1.12 million
6	Virgin	n/a
7	Brightview	650,000
8	Breathe	630,000
9	Telewest Blueyonder	571,000
10	Clara.net	450,000

Star performers

Features: Tiscali (www.tiscali.co.uk)

Value: Gio Internet (www.giointernet.com)

Commitment to cutting costs: DigitalServe (www.digitalserve.co.uk)

Customer service: AOL (www.aol.co.uk)

Overall: Freeserve

Unmetered Access

THE UNMETERED ACCESS market has lost out somewhat since everyone twigged that they could go ten times faster online by coughing up a couple more quid a month. Nevertheless, we've seen some interesting developments from providers of 0800 services and things can get even better for those who like to pay for their dial-up access up front.

The year started with a bump however, for many unmetered subscribers, as the big ISPs continued their ruthless campaign to give heavy users the boot. Providers such as BT Openworld and Tiscali have been getting tough with their hardcore bandwidth-hogging customers, demanding that they reduce their online hours to less than 150 a month. While some have heeded this warning and curbed those crazy all-night surfing sessions, others have continued to abuse their connection and consequently paid the penalty by being shown the door by their ISP.

Connection quarrels aside, it's hard to remember a time when subscription-based dial-up access in the UK tasted so sweet. Aside from AOL's omnipotent free trial discs, which seem to be breeding faster than a rabbit at a sperm bank, we've seen a number of tantalising deals spring up in the last few months. For instance, BT Openworld (**www.btopenworld.com**) is now charging its Anytime subscribers only £5.99 for their first month's access, after which they'll pay just £15.99 per month. The ISP should also be commended on its effective email anti-virus and anti-spam protection, which comes free with the package.

Night owls only

If you prefer to do your surfing when the sun goes down you can save a packet by signing up to one of the night-time-only deals that have been launched of late. Electric Magic (**www.electric-magic.co.uk**) is offering insomniacs and overnight downloaders the chance to access the Net between 1am and 8am for nothing for their first month, then £5 a month after that.

Bargain basement specialist Gio Internet (**www.giointernet.com**) provides twilight access (between 1am and 8am) for £3.99 with no cut-offs. Mind you, at £7.99 a month for access any time of the day or night, you won't find a cheaper unmetered dial-up in the UK at the moment.

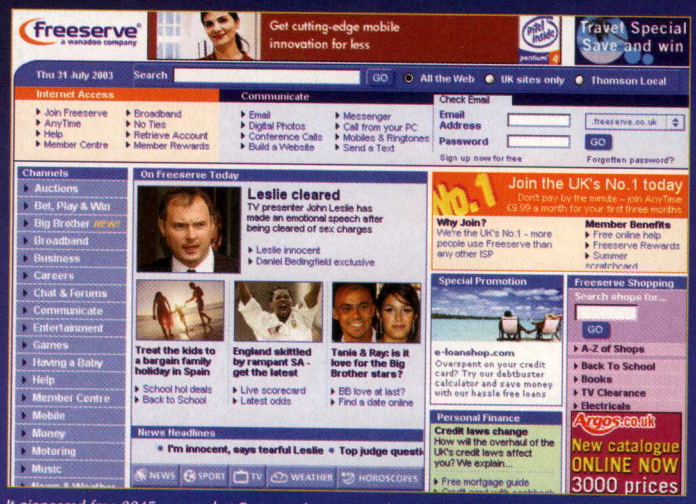
Like most things in life though, you always get what you pay for with unmetered Net access, and by splashing out a bit extra on a service you get a healthier array of features rather than just a basic connection. The pick of these include Tiscali's Anytime service (**www.tiscali.co.uk**) which gives you a host of goodies including free Webmail, 100Mb of Web space, free SMS messaging via your computer and access to more than 60,000 downloads – many of them free. The service costs £14.99 per month, though the generous Italian ISP is currently offering a free one-month trial, plus a free gift of a multimedia CD-ROM when you sign up.

Telco told off

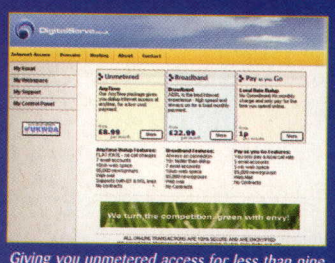
The big news to hit this section of the Net access market recently is Oftel's decision to force BT to slash the wholesale cost of 0800 access. Following an investigation into unmetered access, the regulator told Telco to cut prices by 17 percent, concluding that it had been charging operators for certain call routing and call management measures that were no longer necessary for dial-up access.

It remains to be seen whether the operators will pass the savings on to the ISPs, and the Internet Service Providers Association remains sceptical that customers will notice any difference. The ISPA's communications manager, Brian Ahearn, stresses: "It's not guaranteed that they [the operators] will pass it on to the ISPs. Because of the high level of competition in the UK, they have been operating at very low margins for some time." (See news on page 9 for more details).

Whatever the eventual outcome of that particular development, unmetered dial-up access will be with us for some time to come, and it's worth shopping around for one of the many special treats ISPs will throw at you to convince you not to do business with any of the other hundreds of providers on the market.



It pioneered free 0845 access, but Freeserve's unmetered action is one of the best around



Giving you unmetered access for less than nine quid a month, DigitalServe could do you a turn

£20,000 for only £150 a month
Save Over £100 a Year on Broadband, Dial-up or ISDN Internet Access Today!
Broadband £18.95
Dial-up £7.99
128k ISDN £19.99
Join Gio Internet Today!
Broadband ADSL Only £18.95
The UK's Cheapest Broadband Service Ever!

Gio Internet has pioneered the cheap ISP deal, with ADSL and unmetered prices to shout about

Choosing an ISP

TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING AN ISP

1. OFF-PEAK DEALS
If you normally only use the Internet during the night, there's no point wasting your money paying to be connected to an unmetered package all day. Many dial-up ISPs offer a service that lets you connect during off-peak hours for around £5 to £10 a month.

2. WIRES-ONLY ADSL
If you're interested in getting broadband and feel as though you know your way around a computer, you're probably best off plumping for a wires-only service and fitting the filters yourself, as you'll save a fortune on setup costs.

3. SUBSCRIPTION ISPS
There was a time when owning an Internet connection meant paying a monthly subscription as well as your call charges. Thankfully, we're blessed with a few more options these days, but subscription-based dial-up services still exist today, and signing up means you're guaranteed a different class of customer service and optional extras.

4. ONLINE GAMING
Remember that some ISPs are better suited to online gaming than others, so if you're the sort of person who hasn't seen their family for three months thanks to Everquest, it's worth checking what's on offer from the ISPs in terms of games servers and fixed IP addresses.

5. BROADBAND CONTRACTS
As with everything in life, you should always read the small print before deciding to sign up with a broadband ISP. Although certain providers will tempt you with offers such as free line activation, many of these deals are based around you signing a 12-month contract, and you'll be liable to pay the activation fee if you terminate the deal before this point.

Star performers

Features: Demon (www.demon.net)

Value: Bulldog Communications (www.bulldogdsl.com)

Commitment to cutting costs: Virgin (www.virgin.net)

Customer service: Freeserve (www.freeserve.co.uk)

Overall: BTOpenworld

ADSL

OF COURSE, DIAL-UP access is becoming old hat now, and much like when colour TVs became affordable to Joe Public in the early Seventies, Net users have been flocking to trade in their cumbersome old connections for a shiny new broadband pipe.

According to figures published by Oftel in May, the UK has now reached the two-million broadband subscribers mark, with 35,000 new customers switching to warp-speed every week. As Oftel's director general of telecommunications, David Edmonds, pointed out when the figures were released in May, this is a fairly astonishing feat for the ISPs when you consider that it took two years to reach one millions connections, but only seven months to reach two million.

"Some ISPs have decided to do away with their activation fee altogether"

The rise in the number of broadband connections has come through a combination of more competitive pricing and the increased availability of ADSL. While originally slated for the slow rollout of DSL exchanges, BT seems to have finally got its act together, and its 'trigger scheme' system – whereby upgrades are linked to demand in the exchange – seems to have done the trick for rural Net users.

The year began brightly for many ISPs, and before customers had time to digest their Christmas turkeys BT had temporarily slashed the price it charged ISPs to activate an ADSL connection. This meant that many services, including BTOpenworld, Pipex, One Tel and FairADSL, waived their setup costs for customers signing up between January and March.

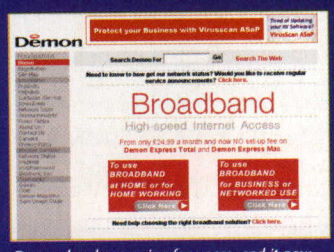
Luckily, some ISPs are still full of Christmas spirit and have decided to do away with their activation fee altogether. Notable services include AOL, which besides offering free activation, is currently offering a free modem worth £95 to anyone taking out its broadband service, which costs £27.99 a month. PlusNet's Broadband EasyStart self-install service (**www.plus.net**) also comes with free activation and a free modem, though at £27.99 a month it's more expensive than its no-frills product, ADSL HomeSurf, which will set you back just £18.99 per month. There are a few other deals, such as Demon's Express Total package (**www.demon.net**) , where you'll get free activation if you buy the DSL modem from the ISP at £59.99. It's always worth checking contract details though, as many service providers serve up free activation on the basis that you're tied to your connection for 12 months.

Still going strong

Despite many predictions that bargain basement ADSL couldn't be sustained over a long period of time, many of the no-frills, access-only deals are still thriving. These include FairADSL (**www.fairadsl.co.uk**) whose Home 500 service costs a meagre £18.99 a month with a contention ratio of 50:1. What's more, the company is currently offering the first month's worth of access for only a fiver. The self-styled 'cheapest broadband service ever' is served up at £18.95 per month by Gio, which is free of time limits, bandwidth restrictions and download capping. We're slightly mystified about the whole 'cheapest ever' tag, seeing as the ISP once charged just £17.99 a month, but nevertheless it's worth thinking about if you only need a bare-bones connection.

The UK's broadband range has been sweetened further by the fact that many of the big boys of the ISP world have begun knocking back their setup charges. Virgin.net (**www.virgin.net**), for instance has dropped the charge for its 'broadband starter kit' twice already this year, knocking it down from £79.99 at the turn of

BT Openworld also high customer satisfaction due to its inexpensive rates and good tech support



Demon has been going for years, and it now provides many quality broadband deals

Like a good few other ISPs, PlusNet has a range of ADSL deals depending on your expertise

Pipex made a name for itself with subscription, but people are now flocking to its ADSL service

Virgin is one of a number of broadband ISPs that has cut its tariffs this year

Online advice

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT ISP? CHECK THESE SITES TO HELP YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

NET4NOWT
www.net4nowt.com
One of the greatest destinations for all things ISP, Net4Nowt is famed for its meaty ISP directory, which provides a comprehensive rundown of pretty much every UK ISP. The site's forums are also worth a look, as they allow you to swap ISP horror stories with others.

ISP REVIEW
www.ispreview.co.uk
If it's the latest ISP news you're after, you won't go far wrong in swinging by this site. As the name hints at, ISP Review contains user reviews of Britain's service providers, each being rated and ranked in different categories such as unmetered, ADSL and cable.

ADSL GUIDE
www.adslguide.org.uk
If broadband floats your boat you'd be a fool not to bookmark this site, as it provides all the latest gossip from the DSL world. As well as news on trigger levels and activation fee cuts, you'll also find a lively message board section and a handy ISP comparator.

the year, to £49.99 today. Likewise, Pipex (**www.pipex.net**) currently provides everything that you need to get started, including micro-filters, line conversion and an Alcatel speed touch modem, for just £14.95 (reduced from £17.95) for anyone signing up to its Xtreme Solo2Go service.

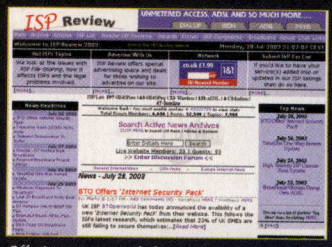
In terms of pricing, things could get even better for the consumer as we head towards the busy Christmas period. BT has recently cut the cost of its wholesale residential ADSL lines by £1.75 to £13 per month, and while ISPs have been reluctant to pass these savings on to customers, this should provide plenty of ammunition for them if a broadband price war should break out.

You wanna go faster?

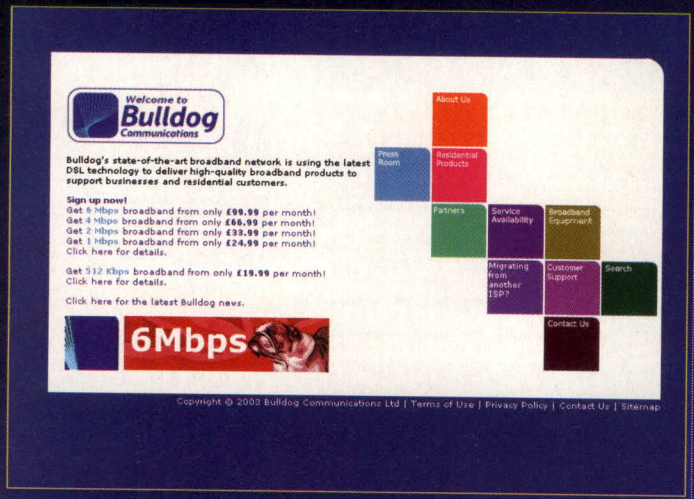
Aside from the sliding prices, the other big trend within the broadband sector at the moment is the fact that the connections are expanding faster than Marlon Brando's waistline in the Seventies. Though still a darn sight quicker than dial-up, a 512Kb connection is no longer the daddy, as ISPs are beginning to bring 1Mb and even 2Mb services within reach of the ordinary Net user.

Highlights of this new crop of consumer/SOHO-targeted ultra-fast connections include PlusNet's Home Worker 1Mb service, which costs £44.99 per month with a £58.75 activation charge. The ISP has also launched a 2Mb service, which costs £59.99 a month plus the one-off activation fee. Freedom2Surf (**www.freedom2surf.com**) has managed to slightly outdo PlusNet with its ADSL Pure IP Power User range, which includes a 1Mb service contended at 50:1 that costs only £34.04 a month, with a £59.99 activation cost – and a 2Mb service starting at £59.96.

Want to get the real story on what's happening in the ISP world? Check out Net4Nowt



Offering a mammoth forum for subscribers to talk about their ISP, ISP Review is a must-see


Welcome to
Bulldog
Communications
Bulldog's state-of-the-art broadband network is using the latest DSL technology to deliver high-quality broadband products to support businesses and residential customers.
Sign up now!
Get 6 Mbps broadband from only £99.99 per month!
Get 4 Mbps broadband from only £66.99 per month!
Get 2 Mbps broadband from only £33.99 per month!
Get 1 Mbps broadband from only £24.99 per month!
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Offering a massive 6Mbps connection is just one reason why Bulldog has proved so popular

"Things could get even better for the consumer as we head towards the Christmas period"

However the surprise package of the year has been Bulldog Communications (**www.bulldogdsl.com**), an ISP which has come from nowhere to become the king of cheap, ultra high-speed Internet access. Some may wonder how the company can sustain such tight profit margins, but Bulldog's range is certainly worth barking at.

For instance, the provider is running an offer whereby you can order a 2Mb connection for a preposterous £29.36 a month if you order before 31 August. At £24.99 a month, its PrimeTime 1000, 1Mb service is cheaper than most 512 connections, and Bulldog now even serves up an incredible 6Mb service for a shade under a ton a month.

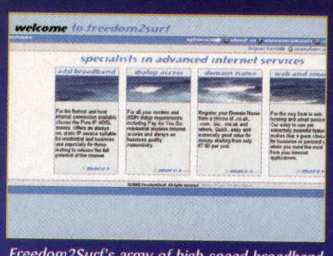
Look at the features

Of course, it's not just about the money. No really, it isn't. When some people join up with an ISP, they're looking for that extra bit of quality service and stacks of useful features, so don't mind paying a bit extra for the privilege. If you're looking for an ISP that offers you specific goodies such as free Web space or multiple mail accounts, it's worth checking out sites like ISPReview (**www.ispreview.co.uk**) and Net4Nowt (**www.net4nowt.com**), where you can exchange comments with other users in the forums.

Demon is one of the top dogs when it comes to broadband features and at £25 a month its ADSL Solo package delivers a well-stocked hamper of a static IP address, unlimited email addresses, a decent newsfeed hosting binary groups, and no download caps. You also get 20Mb of Web space, two free Real audio/video streams, free fax to email and free use of Turnpike.

As the next wave of broadband users is set to come from less-experienced Net users who may not quite have grasped the full potential of high-speed Net access, ISPs are increasingly looking at tailored content as a means of wooing new subscribers. Services such as One.Tel's Unplugged package (**www.onetel.net**), costing £27.99 a month, are beginning to include their own portals, which in this case includes access to MTV's and BBCi's exclusive broadband content.

With BTOpenworld climbing into bed with a proven content provider to introduce the new AOL-style BT Yahoo! package and as online gaming continues to burgeon, we can expect to see much more in the way of branded content from ISPs in the next few months.



Freedom2Surf's army of high-speed broadband accounts makes it a winner with power users

One of the older ISPs on the block, OneTel can still slug it out in a broadband price war

Top ISP freebies

Free gift	ISP
Flights to Florida	Tiscali Pay-As-You Go (offer ends 31 Aug)
Multimedia CD-ROM worth £29.99	Tiscali (www.tiscali.co.uk)
Two-for-one deals on family days out	Freeserve (www.freeserve.co.uk)
Broadband modem	Telewest (www.telewest.co.uk)
DSL modem	AOL (www.aol.co.uk)

Star performers

Features: NTL (www.ntl.co.uk)

Value: NTL (www.ntl.co.uk)

Commitment to cutting costs: Telewest (www.telewest.co.uk)

Customer service: Telewest (www.telewest.co.uk)

Overall: Telewest (www.telewest.co.uk)

Alternatives to DSL

WITH SO MANY changes afoot in the ADSL sphere, it's easy to forget that there are plenty of other ways of sorting yourself with a high-speed connection. Not least are the cable services, which have always prided themselves on being one step ahead of their younger DSL cousins, helping to shape the face of broadband Britain.

This was confirmed back in April, when NTL and Telewest announced that they'd reached the magical one-million customer mark between them, giving them yet another opportunity to shout 'nyah nyah nyah nyah nyah' at BT, who didn't hit the million wholesale ADSL figure until June. With over 12 million homes now able to receive cable, it's becoming a more appetising option for many Internet users.

Always keen to lead the way in innovative new connection options, Telewest was one of the first UK ISPs to launch a 2Mb consumer broadband service, and at £50 per month with free connection for existing broadband subscribers, it makes an affordable option for those who need that extra bandwidth fix. Both Telewest and NTL offer a reasonably priced 1Mb service too. NTL charges just £34.99 per month and is currently offering free connection, while Telewest charges just a penny more per month for its 1Mb Blueyonder package. Of course, if you don't need to clock such dizzying speeds, the cable ISPs will do you a turn with their 'slower' services. NTL still serves up 600Kb a second of online joy for £24.99 a month, and Telewest charges the same for the Blueyonder equivalent, although this runs at a slightly slower 512Kb, the same as ADSL.

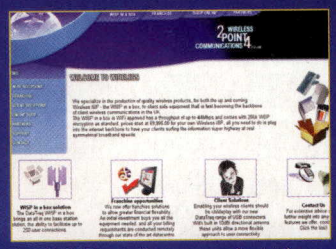
Although we haven't seen much in the way of broadband price cuts from the cable providers of late, customers are starting to get much more for their money, thanks to an increase in broadband-specific content on Blueyonder and NTLworld.

But what happens if you're one of those unlucky few who are untouched by ADSL and cable? The answer is you'll probably have to plump for a satellite ISP if you're hell-bent on getting broadband. Until very recently, this would involve taking out a second mortgage to fund the charges, and it's fair to say the satellite ISP market has yet to settle down. Since the turn of the year we've already seen several providers grounded, including the likes of IPviaSat and SatISP. On the flip side, a number of new boys have appeared, including ZX3 Internet (**www.zx3.biz**) which offers a 512K satellite connection, albeit for a chunky £258 per month, with a £400 setup charge. Another newcomer, 2point4 (**www.2point4.co.uk**) is dishing out 512K satellite access for a more palatable £35 per month, though it does come with a 500Mb bandwidth limit and a three-month minimum contract.

The more established players in the satellite market such as BT Openworld (**www.btopenworld.com**), Silvermead (**www.silvermead.net**) and Europe Online continue to make headway, but it remains to be seen whether accessing the Net via satellite has a future. At present, customers are being put off by complex connection procedures, stingy bandwidth restrictions and high subscription costs, so it's a case of watching this space.

"There are plenty of other ways of sorting yourself with a high-speed connection"

If you live in a non-ADSL area, and you can get NTL, then you should have signed up by now



At only £35 a month, newcomer 2point4's satellite service might just tempt you

As well as a range of Internet services, Silvermead also does a good line in satellite

ZX3 might be new to the satellite scene, but its service is proving incredibly popular

Wi-Fi choice

If 2002 was the year when broadband access finally became an affordable reality, then this year will be remembered as the age when Wi-Fi hit the big time. Commercial wireless hotspots have been popping up across the country since the start of the year, allowing roving Net users to get connected from a range of locations in the UK without having a physical connection. Based on the 802.11 standard, the hotspots allow you to connect via a Wi-Fi operator from your laptop, PDA or Smartphone at places such as hotels, railway stations and coffee shops. The number of wireless operators is increasing steadily, and the main players in the market at the moment are...

BT Openzone (www.bt.com/openzone)

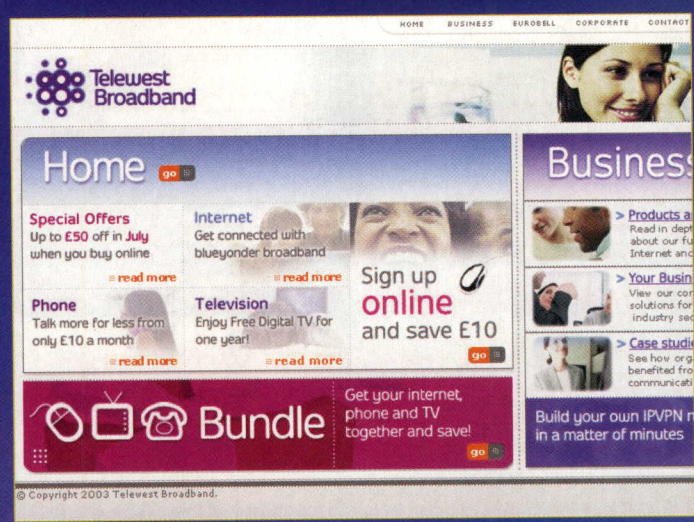
MegaBeam (www.megabeam.com)

UK Explorer (www.ukexplorer.com)

Internet Exchange (www.internet-exchange.co.uk)

Starbucks (www.starbucks.com/hotspot).

At present there's no uniform pricing structure for Wi-Fi, with some operating on a monthly subscription basis while others charge you on a one-off daily basis. Prices range from £5 for 24-hours' use with UK Explorer, to £85 per month for unlimited access to BT Openzone.



With a 1Mb service that costs little more than a standard 512 ADSL deal, Telewest is our cable winner

Star performers

Features: Clara.net (www.clara.net)

Value: Bulldog Communications (www.bulldog.dsl.com)

Commitment to cutting costs: Eclipse (www.eclipse.net.uk)

Customer service: Pipex (www.pipex.net)

Overall: Clara.net

Business Access

CHOOSING THE RIGHT business ISP for your business needs is always a lot trickier than picking a connection for your home, as you've got a whole different set of requirements to take into account.

What you should be looking for is a combination of reliability, robustness and top-class customer support. On top of this you'll almost certainly have your own personal demands in terms of speed, contract options, email offering and hosting space, along with value-added products such as software, stats, eCommerce reporting and domain name services. As a result of the uniqueness of each company's needs, it's hard for us to pin down a service that'll be as good for a small online Tupperware store as it would for a national chain of DIY stores.

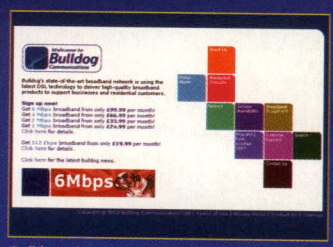
Having said this, there are a number of big-name ISPs that have served up some excellent business access deals this year. Clara.net (**www.clara.net**) has been steadily developing its umbrella of packages, and was awarded the top business provider gong for the second year on the trot at the ISP Association's annual ceremony earlier this year. The company's flexibility has been admired by many and it offers a host of options including DSL, leased lines and top level security products to suit a wide range of business needs. Other ISPs who provide a healthy choice of decent Internet deals for a range of businesses include BT, Easynet and Pipex.

Following BT's decision to cut the cost of its wholesale business ADSL products, a number of ISPs have knocked back the cost of their deals, including Eclipse and V21, who have both dropped their 512K business broadband prices to £34.99 a month.

As for the future of business Net access, it remains to be seen whether xDSL services can sustain the interest of firms in what is an ever-changing technological climate. Analyst firm Gartner is already predicting that Ethernet networks will rule the roost over DSL in major cities, as it's able to offer data transfer rates of up to a staggering 100Gbps. As with the rest of the ISP market, only time will tell. ■

"You should be looking for a combination of reliability, robustness and support"

Clara.net's range of impressive business deals helped it romp home with our coveted award



Bulldog's business services are just a part of what has made the ISP such a success

With a phalanx of quality business deals under its belt, Eclipse Internet could be what you need

Pipex has a reputation that most ISPs would kill for, and it satisfies both home and business users

The winners' enclosure

After musing and deliberating over the highs and lows of Internet access in the last few months, we arrive at our final judgement as we reveal the crème-de-la-crème of this year's service providers. Splitting the awards into six different categories, here are the winners of the *Practical Internet* 2003 UK ISP Awards. Feel free to let us know whether you agree or disagree with our choices by mailing us at pi@paragon.co.uk.

Best 0845 ISP

Tiscali Pay As You Go
www.tiscali.co.uk
Local rate call charges
Free multimedia CD-ROM
Tel: 0845 660 1001

Best unmetered ISP

Freeserve AnyTime
www.freeserve.com
£14.99 a month (£9.99 for first three months if you order before 31 Aug)
Tel: 0800 970 8890

Best ADSL ISP

BT Openworld Home 500 Plug and Go
www.btopenworld.com
£29.99 per month (you get a month's free line rental plus free activation if you order before 30 Sept)
Tel: 0845 6012949

Best ADSL alternative

Telewest Blueyonder 1Mb
www.telewest.co.uk
£35 a month when combined with a Telewest phone service. £39.99 a month when ordered alone. Special offer installation fee of £10 (normally £50)
Tel: 0845 142 4422

Best business ISP

Clara.net
www.clara.net
The ISP offers a range of different VPN, ISDN, ADSL and leased line options
Tel: 0845 355 1000

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Host Europe

Step 1: Select Operating System

Cobalt RaQ

from £74.99 per month
The original "Web-in-a-box" solution.

RedHat Linux

from £99.99 per month
RedHat Linux is the industry standard for web hosting.

Microsoft Windows

from £199.99 per month
Microsoft Windows, the choice of small and large businesses alike.

Sun Solaris

from £199.99 per month
The market leader for reliability and performance.

Co-location

from £99.99 per month
Your server's safe in our Data Centre.

Step 2: Select Specification

RaQ 128
128 MB/20GB/**5 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 256
256 MB/20.4GB/**20 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 512
512 MB/30GB/**30 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 550 256
256MB/40GB/**20 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 550 512
512MB/2x80GB/**30 GB** Data Transfer

Entry
Intel Celeron 1Ghz/128MB/40GB/
10 GB Data Transfer

Professional
PIII 1.13Ghz/256MB/60GB/
20 GB Data Transfer

Ultra
PIII 1.266Ghz/512MB/80GB/
30 GB Data Transfer

Ultra II
2xPIII 1.4Ghz/512MB/2x18GB SCSI Hard Disks running RAID 1/
35 GB Data Transfer

Corporate Advanced
4xEnterprise Web Servers/Xeon Database Server/Enterprise Mail Server/
400 GB Data Transfer

Enterprise
2xAMD Athlon 2Ghz/1GB/4x36GB SCSI Hard Disks (RAID 5)/**55 GB** Data Transfer

Enterprise Xeon
2xIntel® Xeon® 2 Ghz/2GB/4x72GB SCSI Hard Disks (RAID5)/**80 GB** Data Transfer

Advance
2xUltra Web Servers/Ultra II Database & Ultra II Mail Server/**100 GB** Data Transfer

Corporate
3xUltra II Web Servers/Ultra Mail Server/ Enterprise Database Server/
250 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V100 128
500MHZ/128MB/40GB EIDE/
20 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V100 1GB
500MHZ/1GB/2x40GB EIDE/
30 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V120 1GB
650MHZ/1GB/36GB Ultra SCSI/
40 GB Data Transfer

Sun Enterprise
2x450MHZ/2GB/2x18GB Ultra SCSI/
100 GB Data Transfer

Co-location
Your server's safe and secure in our Data Centre. Choose from a range of data transfer (bandwidth) per month and benefit from 24/7/365 unlimited technical support.

Co-location Pro
Half rack of 20 U's of 19" rack server space/15 100 Mb Switch Ports /15 power sockets/up to 30 IP addresses/
45 GB Data Transfer

Co-location Ultra
Full rack of 40 U's of 19" rack server space/23 100 Mb Switch Ports /23 power sockets/up to 60 IP addresses/
70 GB Data Transfer

Step 3: Select Security

Firewall
only £100 per month

Protect your machine from unwanted visitors. Web based control panel allows you to add rules and deny undesirable visitors.

Advanced Systems Monitoring
only £30 per month

The ultimate tool for knowing how your server is operating. Pre-empt critical failure and minimise server downtime with messaging via e-mail or SMS.

Backup
Daily - only £120 per month
Weekly - only £60 per month

Running databases, holding customer information or involved in e-commerce? If your answer is "yes" then order backup now and benefit from free restores if required!

Plus Package
only £199.99 per month
(Save £600 per year)

Firewall, Daily Backup and Advanced Systems Monitoring bundled to save over £600 per year! The complete solution to your Web hosting security.

Product Focus: Ensim

FREE!

Free Ensim software pre-installed and ready to run on every Linux and Windows server!

This industry-leading, web hosting platform allows our resellers and customers to manage their hosting environment and administer their server with no technical ability. Ownership of the administrative functions and configuration of your own server will delight your customers, maximize performance and minimize costs. Ensim will transform your Dedicated Server into an easy-to-use, web hosting appliance that's ideal for web developers, designers and single site users alike.

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Free with Linux & Windows Servers

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Our UK Data Centres are designed, owned and managed by us. Situated in London and Nottingham, they benefit from the latest security, backup, power and climate control features available.

Customer Charter

Dedicated Servers are committed to providing you with the highest levels of customer service. Covering all aspects of the customer relationship, it's your assurance of world class service.

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Dedicated Servers have teamed up with one of UK's leading Internet magazines, Internet Works, to bring you a great offer. Purchase any dedicated server from our range and receive a free six months subscription.

Pre-Pay Bonus Pack

A huge bonus if you take out any dedicated server with a value of £2000 or more and pay for the year in advance. Each pack includes 5 leading books on your chosen operating system, that will help you get the most out of your dedicated server; as well as great Host Europe merchandise.

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FREE AND UNLIMITED Technical Support

Unlike most of our competitors we do not charge for technical support or aftersales service. Available with every Dedicated Servers product, you can call or e-mail our support team on an unlimited basis, 24/7/365.

Service Level Agreement

Standard SLA:
Our Industry leading SLA is your guarantee of a totally reliable service. We'll pay you if it's not! Benefit from 99.9% connectivity, 30 minute reboot guarantee, 1:1 contention ratio on bandwidth and a price freeze-forever!

Advanced SLA:
Specially tailored for Enterprise level services and above, the Advanced SLA is perfect for mission critical sites. Backed by a money back guarantee, benefit from 99.999% connectivity, two hour hardware resolution, 30 minute reboot guarantee, 1:1 content on ratio on bandwidth, a price freeze and a personal Account Manager.

Step 5: Contact Us

t: **0870 333 0877**

e: **sales@dedicated-servers.co.uk**

w: **www.dedicated-servers.co.uk**

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Make a mint online

ALEX WADDINGTON TELLS US ALL ABOUT HIS ATTEMPTS TO GET RICH IN ONE WEEK USING THE INTERNET. BUT IS HE LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK?

We all know that using the Internet is a serious drain on our financial resources. From new modems to monthly ISP fees, we're constantly forced to shell out for our precious access. But have you ever stopped to think about how the Internet could be used to generate a serious wedge of the lovely folding stuff for you?

Over the next few pages you'll be treated to a blow-by-blow account of what happened when I embarked upon a serious money-making exercise. My goal was simple: to rake in as much filthy lucre as possible in one short week, using only the Internet, my own acumen and entrepreneurial skills. But to make things just a little bit trickier, I started off with a solitary £10 note in my back pocket.

Although I didn't set myself any concrete targets, my aim was to accrue a few hundred pounds – enough money to buy myself something substantial at the end of it all. I was permitted to earn the cash in any way I saw fit, with the one major proviso that every penny had to be made legally.

At the end of each day I sat down and recorded my thoughts and emotions. To find out whether I managed to make a magnificent mint or ended up a penniless *Practical Internet* pen pusher, follow my one-week diary and all will be revealed...

DAY ONE: DEAR DIARY

"MY FIRST DAY HAS BEEN LONG AND DISAPPOINTING"

To be honest, I've always fancied myself as a bit of a wheeler-dealer. But when you start with just £10 in your pocket, making a mint is a tough task, and my first day has been long and disappointing.

I started off by opening a betting account with Blue Square (**www.bluesq.com**), which offers a free £10 punt when you deposit your first tenner. The site allows you to bet on everything from football to cricket to horse racing. But if you're after fast cash, the gee-gees are your best bet.

I scoured several betting sites and columns for hot tips and laid £10 worth of bets. Sadly, not one of my five punts came in, and I kicked myself afterwards for ignoring a good tip from the BBC racing site (**www.bbc.co.uk/racing**) in favour of a horse with longer odds. Ah well, you live and learn. Still, £10 left in the bank for tomorrow, so who knows what might happen.

*Bet on all sorts of stuff until you're blue in the face with Blue Square (**www.bluesq.com**)*

As well as everything else, the BBC site also has some fine horse racing coverage

Banalotto now pays out a staggering £100,000 jackpot – and it's all so easy as well

The Net is awash with free lottery sites that offer cash prizes, so I registered with plenty of these. Personally, I recommend playing Bananalotto (**www.banalotto.co.uk**), Loopy Lotto (**www.loopylotto.com**), Striker Million (**www.strikermillion.com**), The Daily Draw (**www.dailydraw.com**) and Lotto24 (**www.lotto24.co.uk**). Cash prizes of up to £1m are up for grabs, although realistically you're more likely to win something much smaller.

Unlucky numbers

Sadly, playing the numbers games landed me a big fat zero in prize money. But I did win a voucher from The Daily Draw, giving me money off UK hotel accommodation. After emailing friends, one of them offered me £5 for it, which I gladly accepted. So that was my first fiver earned – a few more would be very welcome.

The Striker Million game also incorporates a bonus free scratch card game and I came within a whisker of winning a cash prize. Scratch cards have always proved quite addictive for me, and once I'd played one game I was hungry for more. Luckily, ScratchandMatch (**www.scratchandmatch.com**) offers you two free scratch cards per day, and although I didn't win anything today, I feel I may strike lucky before the week is out. Tombola (**www.tombola.co.uk**) is another entertaining free scratch card site that's worth visiting, although again I came away empty handed.

Away from gambling and betting, I decide to visit The Prize Finder (**www.theprizefinder.com**) and enter half a dozen competitions closing at the end of today. I went for contests offering prizes like DVD players, CDs and books, which can be easily sold on Internet auction sites such as eBay (**www.ebay.co.uk**). I've got my fingers crossed for some good news within the next few days.

Get all the fun of a scratchcard without spending money at ScratchandMatch.com

Airing my views

I also stumbled across a site called Born To Loaf (**www.borntoloaf.co.uk**) which gives excellent advice on ways of trying to make money on the Net. One technique is to email topical letters to newspapers such as *The Sun* (**www.thesun.co.uk**). After visiting the tabloid's site to get an idea of the sort of stuff it prints, I fired off a strong and opinionated letter in the hope of getting it printed and earning a handy £15. Let's hope my acerbic prose catches the editor's eye.

Opinion sites such as Ciao (**www.ciao.co.uk**) don't pay as well as they used to, but I still got £1 for signing up. Ciao also offers members cash rewards from £2 to £16 for participating in surveys, so let's hope they invite me to take part. I also signed up with the likes of Visitor-Friendly (**www.visitorfriendly.com**), Gozing (**www.gozing.com**) and MBS Internet (**www.mbsinternet.net**), which lured me with talk of cash rewards for completing online surveys. They all said they'd be in touch. Hope it's sooner and not later.

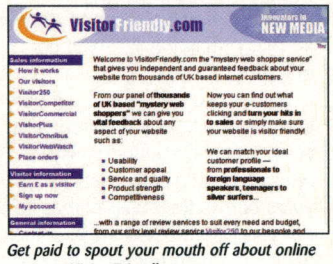
The rules

THE TERMS OUR CHALLENGER HAD TO ADHERE TO

1. **Only £10 to start with** It's easy to accrue money if you're already loaded, but it's not so simple when you've only got a tenner to work with.
2. **Only seven days to earn** Any cash that rolls in after the end of the seventh day cannot be included in the final total.
3. **All methods must be legal** It goes without saying really that all cash must be legitimately earned.
4. **Money must be made using online resources** The Internet must be used to earn every single penny.
5. **No borrowing** Money cannot be generated using loans or borrowed cash.

Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
The Daily Draw (www.dailydraw.com)	+ £5.00
Ciao (www.ciao.co.uk)	+ £1.00
Daily profit	+ £6.00



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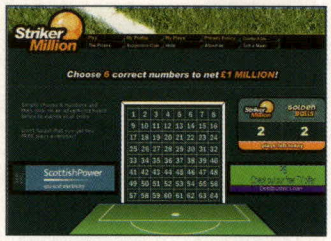
DAY TWO: DEAR DIARY

Well, another day of hard work has passed, and the rewards have not been great. But I figure that if I put in the spadework early on, I'll reap substantial rewards later in the week. At least, that's the theory.

So, what did I do today in my quest to make a marvellous mint? Well, the morning was spent re-entering the big online lotteries such as Bananalotto, The Daily Draw and Striker Million. I also had a quick go on the free scratch card sites ScratchandMatch and Tombola, but my luck wasn't in.

My next move was to visit The Prize Finder Web site, and seek out all the competitions that close today. I entered 12 altogether, and as before I focused on contests offering smallish prizes that could be auctioned on eBay and posted to the winning bidder with relative ease.

After blasting off a fiery email to *The Sun* and also *The Daily Mirror* (**www.themirror.co.uk**) about footballer Harry Kewell's transfer from Leeds United, in a bid to earn some dosh for a published letter, I turned my thoughts to the afternoon's horse racing.



Win yourself a million squid at the football-themed Striker Million lottery site

After checking out the tips being offered by BBC Racing, The Sun Online and The Racing Post (**www.racingpost.com**), I used my remaining £10 free bet with Blue Square to back a 13-2 favourite running in one of the day's main races. And guess what? My four-legged friend came galloping across the finishing line in first place!

I tell you, I was leaping around in front of my TV like a three-year-old. My first gambling success netted me a tidy £75 return, so I'm a full £65 up. Although I was tempted to indulge in a little more gambling, I decided it was best to quit while I was ahead.

Sadly, no luck with the lotteries today – in fact, I didn't even manage to match one number. But given my success on the nags today, I didn't really give a damn...

Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
Blue square(www.bluesq.com)	+ £75.00
Daily profit	+ £75.00

DAY THREE: DEAR DIARY

I have to say I don't think much of these 'online surveys'. I've registered with several online companies and all I've been offered so far is a few vouchers in exchange for my opinions. Well, forget it. What I'm looking for is real, hard, fast cash.

After yesterday's win, I decided to withdraw £50 from Blue Square, and leave £25 available for further flutters. There's a big cricket match coming up tomorrow between England and South Africa, and I fancy backing a few individual players to do well, so that remaining £25 will come in handy.

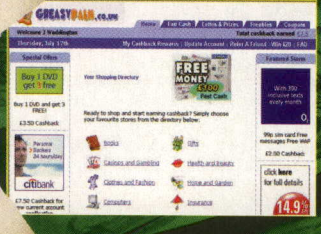
As per usual, I spent the morning entering my lottery numbers. I'm aware many big winners play religiously on a daily basis for many years before their ship comes in, but you just never know your luck. Sadly, at the end of the day I was left with nothing to show for my numerical endeavours.

Out of habit, I visited The Prize Finder and submitted entries to about half a dozen competitions. But I'll not bother after today, as there won't be enough time to turn any prizes I do win into hard cash. I also decided to email one final letter to both *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror* in a bid to scoop a tasty financial reward.

The latest round of Big Brother evictions took place earlier this evening, and I received an interesting tip from one of AOL's PR bods this morning. He informed me AOL's online polls were an excellent basis for betting on who would get the boot that particular week. Unfortunately, I'm not a member of AOL and so couldn't access this valuable information.

"WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR IS REAL, HARD, FAST CASH"

Instead, I had to settle for putting £10 on a horse priced at 7-1. Sadly, I think it's still running. But on the plus side, I made an easy £2.50 simply by signing up with shopping portal GreasyPalm (**www.greasypalm.co.uk**).



Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
Greasy Palm (www.greasypalm.co.uk)	+ £2.50
Blue square (www.bluesq.com)	- £10.00
Daily profit	- £7.50

DAY FOUR: DEAR DIARY

"AFTER ABOUT 30 MINUTES I FOUND MYSELF BETTER OFF"

It may be the weekend, but that hasn't hindered my progress towards raking in a nice wedge for myself. I got an email this morning telling me I had won a copy of Gangs of New York on DVD. This item retails for £24.99, so I should be able to recoup a decent amount by selling it on eBay. Speaking of which, I also rounded up seven items of unwanted clutter and put them up for sale on the famous auction site. It would be nice to make £50 from this old junk, especially since there's a working external CD burner up for grabs.

Following the £2.50 I earned yesterday by signing up with GreasyPalm, I took advantage of another great deal offered to me. In return for signing up for a Marbles credit card – which offers a very nice 0% interest rate for the first six months on all balance transfers and purchases – GreasyPalm rewarded me with a very agreeable £7.50.

While on a roll, I also decided to write an opinion about my most recent holiday for the Dooyoo (**www.dooyoo.co.uk**) Web site. I spent about one hour writing an informative 1,000-word article, and a few short hours later it had been awarded excellent ratings by 20 other members. This earned me 600 Dooyoo miles, which equates to 60p. Okay, that's not exactly a fortune, but one member has nominated my review for a 'crown', which could earn me an extra £1.50.

As mentioned in a previous entry, a big cricket game was being played today, so I decided to place a few bets. After all, you have to speculate to accumulate, don't you? I visited the Web sites of *The Guardian* and *The Independent* to read the learned previews and predictions for the match. After this, I returned to the Blue Square site and laid a series of four bets worth £15 in total. Alas, only one of them came in, earning me my original £15 back.

As usual, I played the biggest online lotteries, but one matching number was the best I could muster today. I also had a bash at the scratch card sites, which I always enjoy, but failed to strike it lucky.

Today I also came across a UK-based gaming site called Getminted (**www.getminted.com**), which only requires a minimum deposit of £3. Stakes start from just 20p per play and there's a great selection of seaside arcade-style games to flirt with. I took advantage of a special offer that gave me an extra £5 on top of my initial £5 deposit. After about 30 minutes of sensible and restrained gambling, I found myself £5 better off. Result or what?

Indulge your gaming/gambling fantasies at the potentially money-spinning Getminted.com

As well as being one of the biggest shopping portals around, DooYoo also pays for opinions

Earn cash back for your online shopping ventures by popping along to Greasypalm.co.uk

Bag yourself a bountiful Net booty with the help of Lotto24's prize draws

Sign up for a free 0845 account with Tiscali, and you get a free PC game. Can't be bad...

Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
Greasy Palm (www.greasypalm.co.uk)	+ £7.50
Dooyoo (www.dooyoo.co.uk)	+ £0.60
Getminted (www.getminted.com)	+ £5.00
Daily profit	+ £13.10

Straight from the horse's mouth

WHERE TO CHECK THE FILLIES' FORM

BBC RACING
www.bbc.co.uk/racing

Being a regular *Radio Five Live* listener, I was delighted to find racing correspondent Cornelius Lysaght offering tips for most of each day's major races. If I'd taken his advice on Day One, I would have got off to a flyer.

THE SUN ONLINE – TEMPLEGATE
www.thesun.co.uk

The Sun newspaper's respected tipster, Templegate, makes his picks available online every day. A good selection of tips is offered for different races, and the decision to back my winning horse on Day Two was largely down to his advice.

RACING POST
www.racingpost.com

This online version of the revered racing rag is an essential destination for any punter wanting a flutter on the horses. It offers daily tips for just about every race being held, and helped me strike it lucky on Day Seven.

DAY FIVE: DEAR DIARY

"I MUST REMEMBER NOT TO GET CARRIED AWAY"

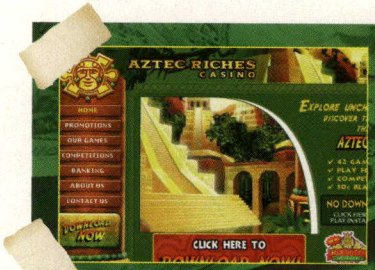
Being a nice sunny Sunday, I spent most of the day away from my PC. Early this morning I did go online and enter the big Internet lotteries, but two matching numbers was the best I could manage. I had a quick play on ScratchandMatch and Tombola, but as usual came away empty-handed.

In the early evening, I found an American casino site called Aztec Riches (**www.aztecriches.com**) that gave me $12 (£7.50) of free credit when I opened an account. After signing up, I spent about ten minutes happily playing roulette, and frittered away my $12. But sensing my luck may be in I returned later, deposited $20 (£12.60), and managed to turn this into $30 (£18.90) using the old wheel of black and red fortune. Deciding to quit while I was ahead, I withdrew the cash and walked away.

But it wasn't long before I was giving the tables another crack, this time at Challenge Casino (**www.challengecasino.com**) which also rewarded me with a free $12 to play with when I opened an account. Sadly, this credit disappeared rather quickly and I decided I'd had enough gambling for one day.

Looking for a bit of intellectual stimulation, I visited online polling site YouGov (**www.yougov.com**). I received £1 just for signing up, and within an hour had an email inviting me to participate in an interesting 30-minute survey, which netted me a handy £2 in cash. I also stumbled across a site called Freebiers Club UK (**www.freebiersclub.co.uk**), which informed me Tiscali was offering a PC game worth £24.99 in return for signing up for a 'pay-as-you-go' Net account. I took advantage of this, and then advertised my booty on eBay.

Going into my final two days, I've got to say things are looking pretty good. I've plenty of money in reserve and hopefully more to come from sales of goods on eBay. Conservative speculation through online betting and gambling has been the key, but I must remember not to get carried away and blow the lot!



Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
Aztec Riches(www.axtecriches.com)	+ £6.30
YouGov(www.yougov.com)	+ £3.00
Daily profit	+ £9.30

Case study

NAME: Ian White
AMOUNT WON: £1,000,000
DATE: August 2002
SITE: The Daily Draw
URL: www.dailydraw.com

UK online lottery and gaming sites have been running since the late Nineties, but the first £1m winner didn't emerge until August 2002.

He was 58-year-old Ian White of Essex, who scooped the cash after matching six numbers in The Daily Draw's free lottery. The first Ian knew of his win was when a team from the online lottery arrived on his doorstep, brandishing a cheque.

Sadly, Ian died of cancer earlier this year. But the money helped make his last months very comfortable, and he bought his dream house and car.

When he won, Ian had been playing for over 12 months, so perseverance is clearly needed!

DAY SIX: DEAR DIARY

Good news! After registering with Blue Square last week, I also joined The Blue Bar, which offers several free and fun games. Each week, members who score over a certain amount get free entry into a £500 prize draw, where 50 free £10 bets are given away. It was a nice surprise to check my email this morning and learn I was one of the lucky winners.

I claimed my free bet, checked the form on several sites, and backed a 10-1 shot in one of the afternoon's races. My free £10 bet only let me have a flutter on an outright win, which was fortunate, as it romped home two lengths clear!

Relive the seaside slot machines of your holidays with the games on Rank.com

Get paid for speaking your mind at YouGov. Sounds like the perfect deal to us...

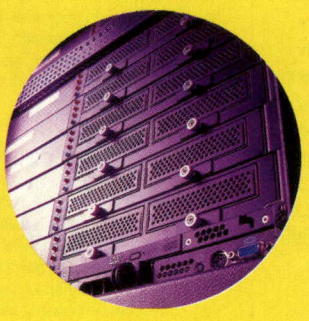
After my profitable experience on Day Four on the Getminted Web site, I decided to investigate Rank.com (**www.rank.com**), which boasts many of the same type of games. Going through the GreasyPalm site, I pocketed a 50p reward plus an extra £10 to play with when I deposited my initial £10.

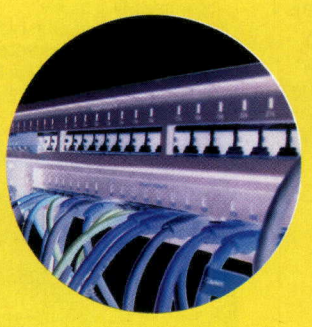
Sadly this tenner disappeared in a blur of rather rapid and rash bets. I blame the weather – it was scorching and I think it affected my judgement. But after this I calmed down and went back to playing conservatively and before long I was £5 to the good. A superb day.

Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
Blue Square (www.bluesq.com)	+ £100
GreasyPalm (www.greasypalm.co.uk)	+ £0.50
Rank.com (www.rank.com)	+ £5.00
Daily profit	+ £105.50

WEB TAPESTRY





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→ DAY SEVEN: DEAR DIARY

"I EXPERIENCED JOY, DESPAIR, TENSION AND ALSO ANGER"

Well, as Vinnie Jones said in a famous Guy Ritchie film, it's been emotional. Over these past seven days I've experienced joy, despair, tension and sometimes anger. Looking in the mirror this morning, I'm sure I saw a few extra grey hairs.

I started my final day by playing the major lottery games, but all I managed to win was a voucher giving me 50p off CDs. I think the key to success when playing online lotteries is to enter every day over a sustained period. I suppose you can't expect to scoop the jackpot inside a week.

Buoyed by my speculative success, I investigated a site called TradIndex (**www.tradindex.com**). This spread betting site caught my eye at the start of this quest for copious amounts of cash, but it struck me that I'd need more than £10 before trying my luck. Anyone who has any experience of spread betting will know that while the wins can be big, so can the losses. The idea is to use your knowledge to predict which way different financial markets will move. You set a value for each point and then decide if the market will fall below or rise above a quoted figure.

I decided to gamble on the FTSE putting on a good spurt, and by lunchtime I was £10 to the good. Unfortunately, the afternoon spelled bad news and by the close of business I was £20 down. But it was certainly an interesting and exciting experience, although TradIndex is probably best suited to people with a good knowledge of financial markets and how they work.

Back to the gee-gees

Although it was late afternoon when I walked away from TradIndex, I still had winnings sitting in my Blue Square account, and so opted to stake £5 on one of the final horse races of the day. After picking up a hot tip from the Racing Post, I took the plunge and backed it at odds of 5-1. Fortunately the horse crossed the line first and left me with a very welcome profit of £25.

Although it only netted me £1, I registered for a site called Consumer Reviews (**www.consumer-reviews.co.uk**), which boasts thousands of opinions on all types of computer-related products. Consumer Reviews pays 10p for each accepted review plus 5p each time a member reads your musings, while the best reviews also receive an extra £1. Although I didn't have time to write any reviews today, I reckon it could be a nice little money-spinner in future. I also visited Dooyoo and found my review of my last holiday had been awarded a precious crown, which earned me an extra £1.50.

My last act of the day was to watch the final minutes of my eBay auctions – the time when bids traditionally come raining in. Sadly, the free PC game I had claimed from Tiscali didn't attract any bids and will no doubt end up at the bottom of a drawer. But it was better news about the other items, which accrued £75 between them. Not bad for a DVD won in a competition and some old junk I hauled out of my wardrobe.

Happy ending

So in the end, Day Seven turned out to be one of the most profitable. Over the last seven days I've made a pretty tidy sum, but I guess I've had my fair share of luck along the way. If that horse hadn't come in on Day Two and Six, it might have been a very different story. But they say you make your own luck, and all I'm worrying about right now is how to go about spending my loot... ■

Earn big, or simply fritter away your life savings very quickly, at Challenge Casino

Big Brother was going strong when Alex was on his cash hunt, so he bet big on the contestants

If you're in need of a fast cash injection then look no further than your friendly eBay

Winners and losers

SITE	PROFIT / LOSS
TradIndex.com (www.tradindex.com)	- £20.00
Blue Square (www.bluesq.com	+ £25.00
Consumer Reviews (www.consumer-reviews.co.uk)	+ £1.00
Dooyoo (www.dooyoo.co.uk)	+ £1.50
eBay	+ £75.00
WEEKLY PROFIT	+ £289.60

Lucky for some

THREE OF THE BIGGEST ONLINE CASH HAULS

£132,000
In January 2003, a woman from Leicestershire won a whopping £132,699.44 playing Bingo Keno on the Rank.com Web site (**www.rank.com**). The prize for a full house wouldn't normally have been so big, but for an extra 20p she opted to play for the Super Jackpot, which had reached a staggering £123,000.

£100,000
In the early months of 2002, free online lottery site Bananalotto (**www.bananalotto.co.uk**) dished out a cool £100,000 to Mike Balston, 54, from Jersey. Balston, who scooped the prize after matching six numbers in the daily draw, said the key to success was playing the game as often as possible.

£70,000
In the spring of 2001, three men each scooped £70,000 after striking football bets with UK online bookmaker Blue Square (**www.bluesq.com**). Each had laid treble bets the previous December, predicting three Italian Serie B teams would draw their final games of the season.

Money for old rope

FIVE PIECES OF JUNK WE SOLD ON EBAY

ITEM: Philips 2x CD-Rewriter
FINAL PRICE: £42.00

ITEM: Brand new Labtec stereo headset
FINAL PRICE: £7.20

ITEM: James – Come Home Live (VHS)
FINAL PRICE: £4.40

ITEM: Three Bob Marley compilation CDs
FINAL PRICE: £4.50

ITEM: Kool and the Gang Live on Stage – CD
FINAL PRICE: £2.30

123-reg.co.uk

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~~£4.20**~~ per month

3 Host

There's no better place to host your site!

123-reg manages its own UK based data centres, with state-of-the-art security and all the backup facilities you would expect from a market leader. Your site will be hosted on a high-end server and be totally under your control via our easy to use control panel. Choose from two great packages that will keep your web sites on-line...all the time!

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250 MB for £2.99† per month, 1 GB data transfer (bandwidth) per month, CGI/Perl, on-line file manager, 10 POP 3 accounts, Webalizer statistics, Unlimited e-mail forwarding addresses.

Xtra Large:
500 MB for £4.99† per month, 2 GB data transfer (bandwidth) per month, CGI/Perl, on-line file manager, 25 POP 3 accounts, Webalizer statistics, Unlimited e-mail forwarding addresses.

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*Plus registrar registration fee, see web site for full details. **Monthly fee must be paid annually.
† Monthly fee, must be paid annually and excludes one-off setup fee of £9.99. All prices exclude VAT. E&OE

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TOP 50 Time-saving Net programs

STOP WASTING YOUR PRECIOUS TIME! FOLLOW **JAMES THORNTON** AND **MARK BILLEN'S** GUIDE TO THE GREATEST PROGRAMS FOR SPEEDING UP YOUR ONLINE ACTIVITIES

It's fair to say that we all spend far too much of our lives wasting time. For instance, the average person spends 24 years asleep, about a year in the toilet and 140 days shaving (perhaps slightly less if you're a woman). So you don't want to squander the rest of your time faffing about with the Internet. All too often processes that should only take a few seconds or minutes end up taking hours, due to the somewhat temperamental nature of the Net.

We've all wasted a sunny afternoon clearing our inboxes of spam, missed our favourite TV programme trying to download a file from a dodgy connection, or spent a whole evening batting pop-up windows away as we surf the Web for the local cinema times. Accessing the Net should be a useful and enjoyable experience, and quite frankly you don't have to stand for all this time-wasting nonsense.

There are literally thousands of Internet applications that profess to save you time, but ironically finding a program that actually lives up to these promises can take an even bigger chunk of your time. That's why we've decided to round up the greatest Net time-savers, empowering you to cut the crap from your online experiences and do something more interesting with your time. Most of the programs featured in the rundown are also included on this month's cover CD. Stand by pop-pickers...

50 SMART CONNECTION BOOSTER 2.25

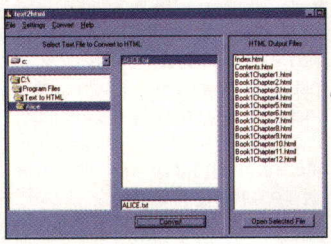
www.softforces.com/smartbooster.htm

You may not live in an ADSL-enabled area or be able to afford a broadband connection, but you can always pretend to have high-speed Net access by installing this handy tool. As its name suggests, Smart Connection Booster ramps up the speed at which you browse, send and receive email, and download files.

49 TEXT2HTML

www.cyber-matrix.com

No one enjoys wasting time unnecessarily typing code manually, which is where Text2html is a real godsend. The program converts text files to HTML, allowing you to instantly create Web pages from text documents. Complete with command line capability, the program handles http, ftp, gopher, telnet and mailto tags.



48 QUIKSMS

www.acumensoftware.com

Text messaging has just about replaced talking as the nation's favoured method of communication, but it's not always the most convenient way of getting in touch. If your battery is flat or you've run out of phone credit, fear not, as QuikSMS allows you to send a text message to any mobile phone in a jiffy.

47 BOOKY FOR WINDOWS 1.1.4

www.yoursurfice.com

There's no disputing the fact that making good use of bookmarks is a great way to sail through the Web, yet synchronising your favourites for use on different browsers can be a tad fiddly. Booky eases the strain however, allowing you to sync your favourites between IE, Netscape and Opera at the drop of a hat.

46 AI STUDIO WATZNEW 1.9.5

www.watznew.com

How many times have you logged on to your favourite sites only to find that nothing has changed and you've been wasting your time? WatzNew regularly checks your favourite sites and mailboxes for changes so you don't have to. The program saves your browsing time still further by gathering all the information and presenting it in a compact view.

43 ANTI-BOSS KEY 3.0

www.mindgems.com

As well as saving you precious time, this application could just spare your career. Anti-Boss Key lets you escape from even the stickiest browsing scenarios by closing down all the browser windows you have open simply by pressing one key – which makes it perfect for hiding any untoward online activity at work...

> "Text messaging has replaced talking as the nation's favourite method of communication"

45 IISYSTEM WIPER 2.2

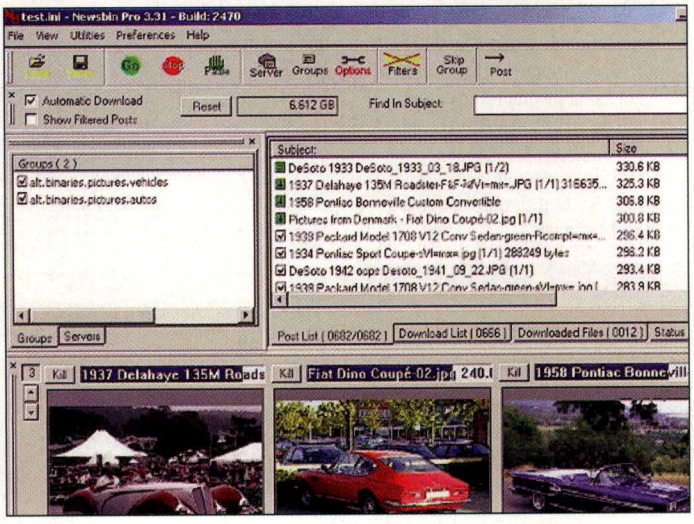
www.iisoftware.net

Not only does this useful app wipe away traces of your online escapades, it also helps to speed up your browsing by removing unnecessary clutter. IISystem Wiper can be used to delete history, cookies, temporary files and much more, making it one of the best free privacy tools out there.

44 NEWSBIN PRO 4.1

www.newsbin.com

It's incredible how much time you can save by ditching Outlook Express and using a newsreader to trawl binary newsgroups. Standing at the top of its class, NewsBin automatically downloads and decodes binary Usenet posts, allowing you to squeeze every drop of goodness from your connection.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Automatic Download
Show Filtered Posts
Reset
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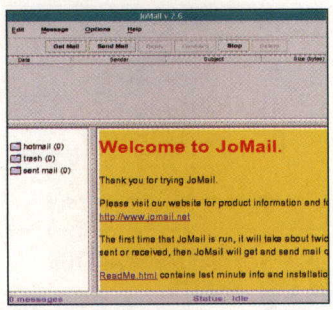
Post List (0682/0682) Download List (0666) Downloaded Files (0012) Status
1937 Delahaye 135M Roads
Fiat Dino Coupé-02.jpg 240.1
1958 Pontiac Bonne...

42 JOMAIL 2.7

www.jomail.net

Named after sultry British tennis player Jo Durie (probably), this time-saving client allows you to check all your Webmail messages without even having to open your browser. The skinnable application saves even more time, thanks to its multiple thread capabilities which allow you to handle different email tasks simultaneously.



41 WEBTRANSLATOR 3.0

www.zhangduo.com

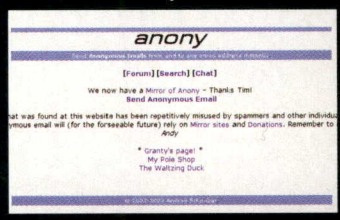
If your knowledge of French stretches to 'petits pois', WebTranslator can save you rooting around in a dictionary trying to decipher a foreign Web page. The program can translate whole sites as well as individual words into various languages including English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese.

Time-saving Web sites

ANONY

anony.co.uk

Anonymous or online email clients don't get much recognition, but they could be one of the most ingenious ideas out there. If you have Internet access but no mail facilities, perhaps when on a public machine, you can still send messages to others and/or send valuable data back to your inbox.



GOOGLE

www.google.com

Just imagine what surfing the Web would be like if we didn't have search engines. Type in what you want and they will get it. In their absence, surfing the Web would be more akin to running through tar. It therefore seems only appropriate that the biggest search engine around gets a deserved mention.

YAHOO BRIEFCASE

briefcase.yahoo.com

Trying to coordinate the distribution of files between a large group of people can be hellish, particularly if there are many versions. Save much time and confusion by using Yahoo's excellent Briefcase that will store your files centrally and securely.

Top 50 time-saving Net programs

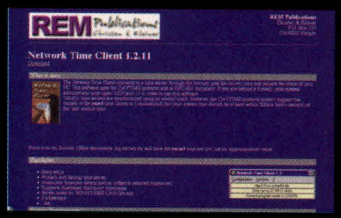
Tied to a tight schedule?

MANAGE YOUR TIME MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THESE CLOCK-WATCHING APPS

NETWORK TIME CLIENT 1.2

www.rempubs.com

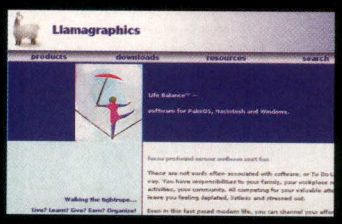
If you're one of those people, like John Cleese in *Clockwise*, who has to be bang on time for everything, this is the program for you. Network Time Client allows you to adjust your PC clock to the correct time from a time server via the Net, bringing it within 500 milliseconds of the atomic clock.



LIFE BALANCE 3.2.1

www.llamagraphics.com

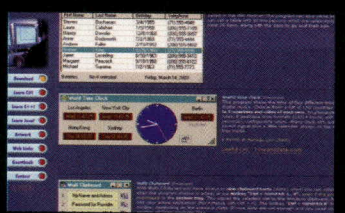
Allowing you to organise your life more effectively, Life Balance serves up a dynamically ordered to-do list which is ranked by importance of your goals, your desired allocation of time and effort and feedback from what you get done every day, helping you to 'set priorities and increase personal productivity' as the program's developer notes.



WORLD TIME CLOCK 2.18

www.programming.de

Want to know whether it's too late to ring your Aunty Flo in Australia or if cousin Don in Jamaica is likely to be back from work? World Time Clock displays the time in five different time zones on your desktop, allowing you to choose from a list of 150 countries and 400 cities.



40 MIHOV GALLERY CREATOR

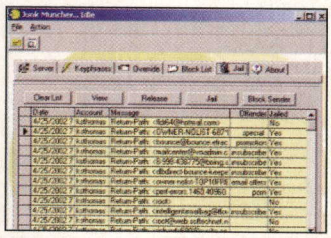
www.mihov.com

Bursting triumphantly into the Top 40 is a clever little program which provides a quick means of sharing your digital photographs with the world. Gallery Creator is an incredibly intuitive means of building attractive pages which serve to link your images together, before uploading the entire gallery to the Web.

39 JUNKMUNCHER

www.junkmuncher.com

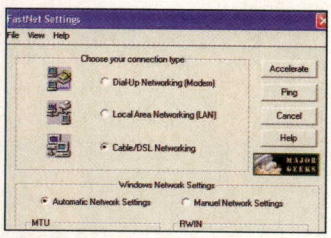
As spam overtakes acne, the rail service and *Big Brother* as the most annoying thing in the world, we're all spending more and more time deleting obnoxious ads from our inboxes. Frankly, you shouldn't have to stand for it and JunkMuncher provides an effective means of filtering junk mail from your POP3 and SMTP accounts.



38 FASTNET CONNECTION ACCELERATOR

www.metrosoft.org/fca.htm

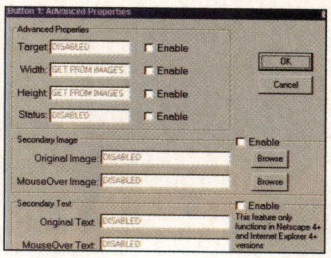
Boasting a connection boost of over 300 percent, FastNet promises to save you time. It optimises Windows settings to make dial-up or ISDN Internet access fly, and will even schedule disconnection times while downloading. Online activity can also be sustained for hours, with a handy search engine included.



37 MOUSEOVER BUTTON WIZARD

www.mobw.net

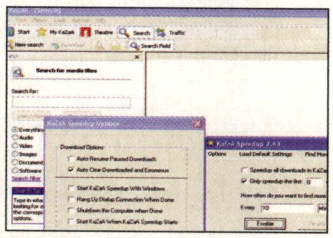
Ever wondered how to create rollover effects for Web buttons and images? Don't worry, just get hold of this handy app. MouseOver Button Wizard will create all the JavaScript needed from the images and links you provide. Adding dynamic content couldn't be easier or quicker.



36 KAZAA SPEEDUP

www.fengsoft.org

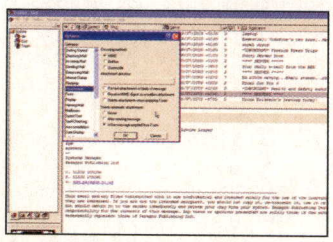
This add-on for KaZaA's Media Desktop enables you to download files up to 50 percent faster. You can set it to periodically scan for network sources and therefore utilise connection bandwidths to the maximum. With plenty of other options included, KaZaA won't know what's hit it.



35 EUDORA 5.2

www.eudora.com

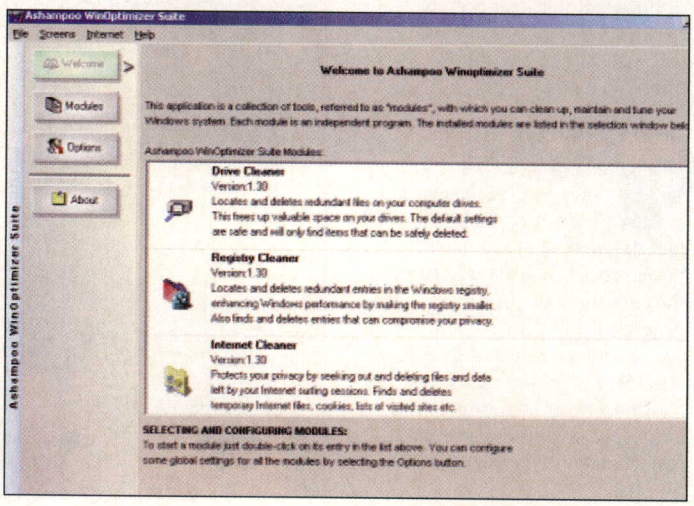
Quite simply, Eudora is the best freeware email client around. How does it save you time though? Well, apart from its wealth of impressive features, it also saves you having to pussyfoot around attachments, because it doesn't allow viruses in like Outlook Express.



34 ASHAMPOO WINOPTIMIZER SUITE

www.ashampoo.com

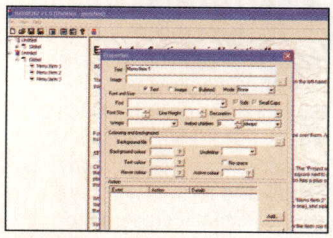
There's nothing like clogged resources for seriously slowing down your machine's performance. This popular clean-up program comes in seven modules for sweeping up unwanted files and tuning your Net connection. It's all mightily intuitive to use, so give your OS a spring clean now!


Ashampoo WinOptimizer Suite
File Screens Internet Help
Welcome
Modules
Options
About
Welcome to Ashampoo Winoptimizer Suite
This application is a collection of tools, referred to as "modules", with which you can clean up, maintain and tune your Windows system. Each module is an independent program. The installed modules are listed in the selection window below.
Ashampoo WinOptimizer Suite Modules:
Drive Cleaner
Version:1.30
Locates and deletes redundant files on your computer drives.
This frees up valuable space on your drives. The default settings are safe and will only find items that can be safely deleted.
Registry Cleaner
Version:1.30
Locates and deletes redundant entries in the Windows registry, enhancing Windows performance by making the registry smaller. Also finds and deletes entries that can compromise your privacy.
Internet Cleaner
Version:1.30
Protects your privacy by seeking out and deleting files and data left by your Internet surfing sessions. Finds and deletes temporary Internet files, cookies, lists of visited sites etc.
SELECTING AND CONFIGURING MODULES:
To start a module just double-click on its entry in the list above. You can configure some global settings for all the modules by selecting the Options button.
Ashampoo WinOptimizer Suite

33 NAVMENU V1.0

www.nospine.net/pipposoft/

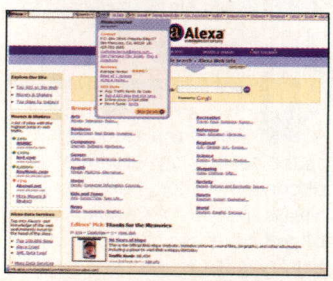
The prospect of adding navigational menus to your Web pages could be quite daunting, but NavMenu is here to help. No coding knowledge is required – simply enter your requirements into a dialog and you're sorted. A menu of site links will soon be yours.



32 ALEXA

www.alexa.com

Alexa is a Google-powered search engine from Amazon with its own downloadable toolbar. Integrated into your browser, it provides instant searches while you surf and pop-up blocking capabilities. There are also stats available for site traffic and a quick-link button for contacting friends.

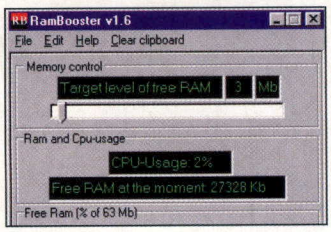


Top 50 time-saving Net programs

31 RAMBOOSTER

www.sci.fi/~borg/rambooster/index.htm

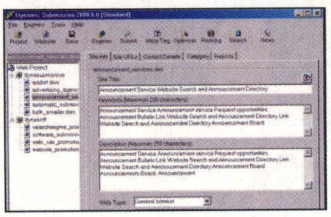
Most people will agree that a PC's memory plays a big part in how speedy it is. RAMBooster cleverly manages your memory to keep things running smoothly, while monitoring CPU activity as well. So if performance bottlenecks are getting you down, look no further!


RAMBooster v1.6
File Edit Help Clear clipboard
Memory control
Target level of free RAM 3 Mb
Ram and Cpu-usage
CPU-Usage 2%
Free RAM at the moment 27328 Kb
Free Ram [% of 63 Mb]

30 DYNAMIC SUBMISSION 7.0

www.internetpromotionaltool.com

This simple program allows you to quickly survey the major search engines for your site's rank. It uses whatever keywords or phrases you specify and requires no installation to run. If the effectiveness of your meta data has been a worry, this could provide the answer.



29 KAZAA LITE

www.kazaalite.tk

You may not think there's much to choose between file-sharing clients, but the popular Kazaa Lite is different. Renouncing

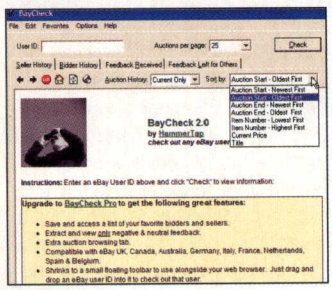
> "Spam has overtaken acne and the rail service as the most annoying thing in the world"

pesky spyware and adware, this 'Fasttrack' P2P application has also been stripped of clunky third-party software to let you find files as painlessly as possible.

28 BAYCHECK

www.hammertap.com

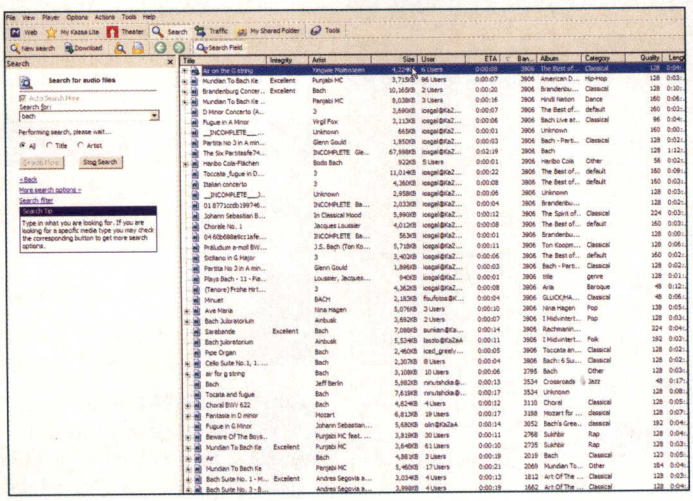
Online auctions are a great place to pick up bargains, but avoiding unscrupulous sellers or bidders can be a headache. BayCheck will archive eBay's records for the user activities of a given ID, so now you can monitor any potential rogue traders quickly and easily.



27 ISYS HINDSITE 5.0

www.isysdev.com

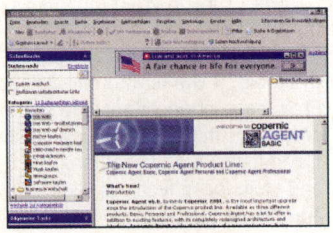
Hindsite is a wonderful thing they say, and how right they are. This app allows Explorer and Netscape users to run text searches on previously loaded pages. It remembers everything you've accessed, so fretting over forgotten URLs should become a distant memory.



26 COPERNIC AGENT BASIC 6.1

www.copernic.com

Searching the Web can be a double-edged sword. Often there's so much info and so little time, so wouldn't it be good to query all the top search engines at once? Copernic's Agent does just that, eliminating duplicates and maintaining a history of matching records.



25 SIMPLE BOOKMARK 1.1

www.thomslm.com

Transferring treasured bookmarks between browsers is at best a real nuisance. Do away with all the hassle by converting those favourite URLs into a page of links. Simple Bookmark takes care of the HTML.

24 CLOSEIEX 2.5

geocities.com/closeiex

Although a candidate for the ultimate in laziness, CloseIeX is actually pretty useful. Pop-ups are the scourge of surfers, and this program adds a button to IE's toolbar to zap them away. It also allows you to close all open instances of the browser with one simple click.

23 12GHOSTS POPUP KILLER

www.12ghosts.com

This powerful application really hits irritating pop-ups where it hurts. Integrated into IE, the program destroys unwanted windows before they are spawned. Adverts are not allowed to download, saving bandwidth, while its automated approach further reduces the bother.

22 AI ROBOFORM 5.2.1

www.roboform.com

Essentially a Web-form filler, RoboForm is particularly adept with password entry and sensitive data. It will remember and save password information from login forms and then use it to automatically log in where needed. Online shopping transactions can also be performed, with payment details safely encrypted.

21 BBC ONLINE TICKER 1.1

www.bbc.co.uk/newsline

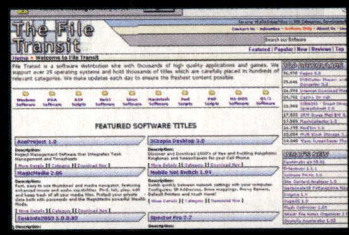
BBC's own desktop ticker isn't the most inspiring thing you'll ever see, but its unrivalled news coverage is a winner. This thin bar will hover on your desktop displaying all the latest headlines, which act as links to the full reports on BBCi.

Time-saving download sites

THE FILE TRANSIT

www.filetransit.com

This site has a nice clean and fresh look to it, with all the available programs grouped into well-defined categories. Web applications are joined by audio, gaming and security downloads, as well as some rather useful programming tools.



FREEWARE FILES

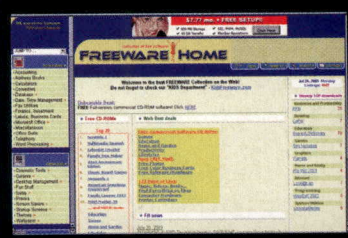
www.freewarefiles.com

If you're trawling the Internet for programs that'll cost you absolutely nothing, look no further. All the applications on this site are completely free and there's more than enough to choose from. There's everything from browsers to desktop themes, so get looking.

FREEWARE HOME

www.freewarehome.com

Another great site for free stuff, Freeware Home boasts an attractive design and excellent navigation. The content is updated regularly and all programs have detailed descriptions, with facilities for users to quickly submit ratings for each download.



Top 50 time-saving Net programs

You're my favourite waste of time

FIVE COMPLETELY POINTLESS PROGRAMS TO HELP YOU NEEDLESSLY FRITTER AWAY AN AFTERNOON

KNOTWORKER 1.1
goldcup.cjb.net
A must-have piece of software for anyone looking to generate and edit Celtic knot designs, KnotWorker will keep you tied to your PC for a good few hours. The program allows you to control the flow of a knot, change its style, rotate and flip it. You really are only limited by your imagination.

GLOBAL TRACKS 6.0
www.jincsolutions.com
Unless you're some sort of wind-hating weirdo, Global Tracks is probably the first program you should download when getting a new computer, as it allows you to track all past and present hurricanes dating right back to 1886.

ENGINECR 1.0
www.sophtwarekodewerks.com
Why waste time surfing your favourite Web sites or emailing your friends when you could be calculating the compression ratio of any internal combustion engine using EngineCR? This indispensable application boasts a raft of features such as a database utility for storing and retrieving various engine specifications.

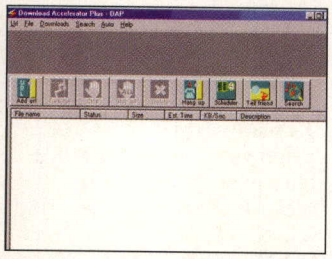
JERSEYWARE 1.2
www.designbychen.com
Once you've installed JerseyWare you'll struggle to imagine how you ever lived your life without it. The program is a baseball jersey editor that allows you to create a custom ballplayer and his jersey using a variety of jersey and player specifications.

VISUAL ROUNDHOUSE 4.0
www.homestead.com
So addictive it'll make you want to take the week off work, Visual RoundHouse is an inventory program for model train operators and collectors, helping you to simplify the process of creating, viewing, analysing and maintaining a personal collection of model trains by spending hours entering information about it.

20 IRFANVIEW 3.8
www.irfanview.com
For a no-frills, simple-to-use and quick image editor, there are few better than IrfanView. It supports all major graphics formats and more, with intuitive drag-and-drop support to boot. Common tools such as cropping, softening and sharpening are also joined by a neat batch conversion facility.

19 GIRAFA 2.08
www.girafa.com
There's probably nothing worse than following a great-looking link and being rewarded with rubbish. Girafa eliminates the hassle of link rot by providing a panel of thumbnails of possible links, so you can preview what's on offer. An integrated visual search engine is also worth checking out.

18 DOWNLOAD ACCELERATOR PLUS 5.3
www.speedbit.com
This program integrates perfectly into your browser to increase typical download speeds threefold. It works with dial-up and broadband connections and will search for mirror sites to optimise file transfer. Automatic hang-up and scheduling features also complement a tidy and well-designed interface.

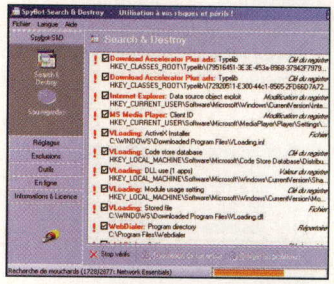


17 TRILLIAN
www.ceruleanstudios.com/trillian
If you like online chat, you might be bewildered by the many different services out there. Trillian solves the problem by supporting mIRC, AIM, ICQ, MSN and Yahoo Messenger in one seriously funky client. Unified contact lists and emoticons are just a few of the extras thrown in.

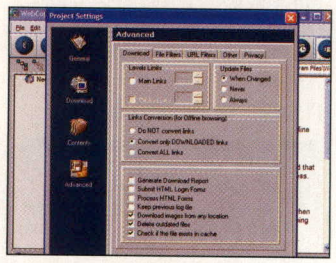
16 EPROMPTER
www.eprompter.com
Less is so often more, and ePrompter's stripped-down philosophy is testament to that. Its simple interface holds everything you need to access a whopping 16 email accounts, including password-protected Webmail. Couple this with automatic spam-killing and you've got yourself a real winner.

15 AIMINGCLICK
www.aimingtech.com
If you think about it, the ability to perform searches from within Windows applications would be real useful. That's where AimingClick comes in, providing a quick link to all manner of engines just by highlighting some text and clicking a menu. Rather clever really.

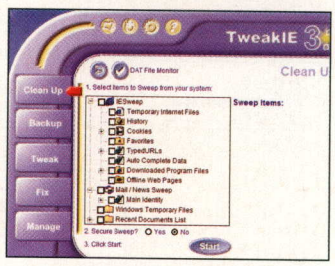
14 SPYBOT – SEARCH AND DESTROY 1.2
spybot.safer-networking.de
As we glide towards the top ten, another security agent makes an appearance. Spybot shows no mercy in removing resource-clogging ad and spyware, while fixing any resulting registry troubles. The interface won't win any beauty contests, but its merciless approach to a popular problem makes it a must-have for surfers everywhere.



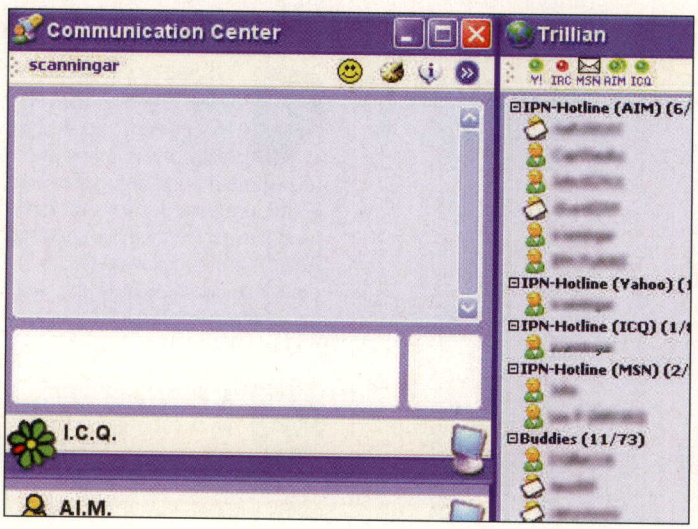
13 WEBCOPIER
www.maximumsoft.com
Ever want to fully digest your favourite sites without being online for ages? Similarly, you may want pages retrieved at a time when you can't be at your machine. WebCopier will access the Net for you and copy or print whole domains if necessary, which can then be burnt to CD for future use.



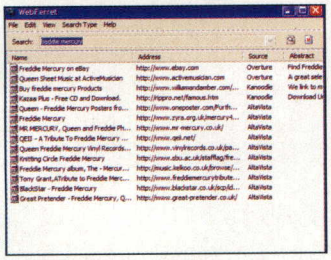
12 TWEAKIE
www.tweakie.com
As 'the premier companion to Microsoft Internet Explorer' TweakIE promises an awful lot. Luckily it delivers by weeding out unnecessary Webjunk like ActiveX programs and cookies. With this performance-hogging clutter permanently swept away, you can also quickly teach IE to operate the way you want it to.



11 WEBFERRET 4.0
www.ferretsoft.com
This could be the first time a hairy rodent has hit the



charts since Roland Rat, but thankfully this program has more of a purpose than the baseball-cap wearing vermin. Fundamentally a desktop search engine, it allows you to mine the Web's resources without firing up a browser. Results are limitless and a number of filters block any unwanted content.



10 HAMMERSNIPE POWERTOOL 1.2

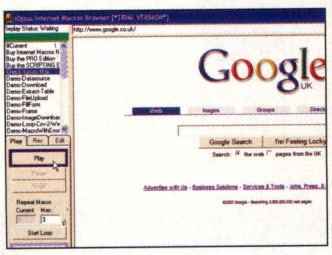
www.hammertap.com

Well pop-pickers, this is where the cream of the crop find themselves, and HammerSnipe scrapes into tenth place for its effective knack in winning online auctions. You'll be able to successfully gazump fellow bidders with this eleventh-hour auction tracker and then wonder how bargain hunting was ever possible without it.

09 IOPUS INTERNET MACROS 3.73

www.iopus.com

Performing the same tedious online tasks can be incredibly boring. That's why iOpus's Internet Macro application has steamed into ninth place. It records repetitive actions such as filling out the same Web forms, passwords and search engines, so you can play



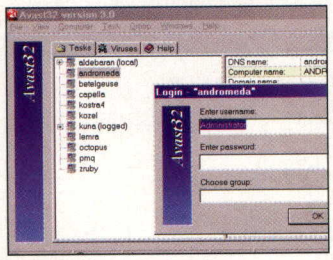
> "Pilfering files from the Net can be one of the most rewarding things about a Net connection"

them all back in one click. If only compiling 'best of' program charts was that easy...

08 AVAST! VIRUS CLEANER 1.0.137

www.avast.com

Anti-virus tools are usually sprawling masses of software that guzzle up the resources they intend to protect. Their libraries of pests from the dawn of time can be a tad heavy, so the answer is Avast. It watches for a select band of the most notorious worms currently on the scene and abruptly stops them in their tracks.



07 RAPIDBROWSER

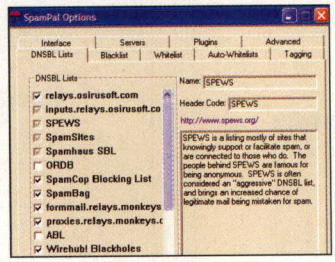
www.rapidmedianetwork.com

Broadband users will delight in this fantastic program. It's all here, from streaming audio and video content to MP3, chat and email functionality in one bundle. Compatible with IE, it allows you to retrieve multimedia content from the Web and play it back as you surf. With its range of channels, including TV and radio, there's enough to entertain you here.

06 SPAMPAL

www.spampal.org.uk

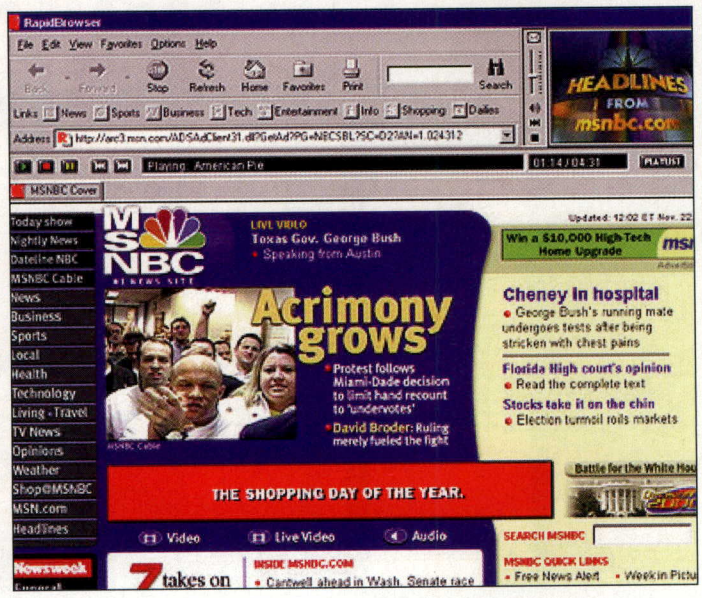
Spam, spam, wonderful spam! This is clearly nonsense because it's the bane of any email user's life, so any tool that gets rid of it is okay by us. SpamPal uses a whole load of filters to ensure that only messages you want to read are delivered. Install this and you should be free of spam once and for all.



05 WEBWASHER

www.webwasher.com

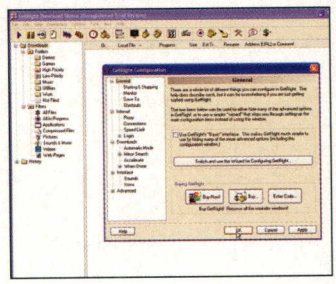
Number five is a program that'll make anyone fed up with Web adverts dance like a fool. It's great for those on a slow connection, because it manages to block virtually all hefty banner and flash ads before they download. There's also a nifty facility for thwarting URL trackers,



04 GETRIGHT 5.01

www.getright.com

Whether you're into audio, video or software, pilfering files from the Net can be one of the most rewarding things about having an Internet connection. It can, however, also be one of the most frustrating things, as you're faced with a barrage of potential broken connections, computer crashes and mammoth file transfers. If you haven't employed the use of a download manager before, you need a good ticking off, as it's a great way to save lengthy download times – especially if you're a dial-up user. GetRight is our king of the downloads thanks to its combination of ease-of-use and powerful features such as download scheduling, pause and resume and error recovery. The program's file segmenting capabilities mean that it can reel in files even quicker by downloading from multiple sources.



Ramp up your connection speed

In days gone by the most popular way of saving a bit of time online was to tweak your Internet and Registry settings in order to squeeze more bandwidth from your connection. Since the advent of broadband, there's a whole lot less tinkering to be done, but if you're still languishing on a dial-up connection there's plenty of stuff that can be done to go faster. Programs such as TweakIE allow you to jiggle about with your Internet Explorer settings to help inject some speed into the browser. The program provides an easy means of removing some of the clutter from IE such as cookies, ActiveX programs and unnecessary data from every site you visit. The other option you have is to fiddle about with your Registry settings to speed up the time it takes for your browser to connect to the Web. For more help performing these intricate procedures you're best off turning to a program such as SpeedUpMyPC (www.liutilities.com), which allows you to change the settings without too much technical knowledge.

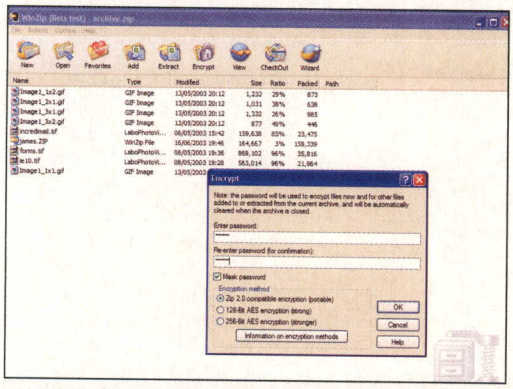
Top 50 time-saving Net programs

03 WINZIP 9

www.winzip.com

For so long the unsung hero of the software world, WinZip is one of those programs that you probably use on a daily basis, would be lost without – yet don't even know that it exists. In essence, WinZip's very anonymity should mark it out from the crowd for selflessly performing a multitude of mundane time-saving tasks for you. The ubiquitous file compression utility saves you time on a whole myriad of different levels, from packaging several photos together to send as a single email attachment, to saving you lengthy file transfers by downloading files from the Net in the compact Zip format. What's more, the sheer popularity of WinZip means that you pretty much need a copy of the program to get the best from the Net.

The good news for WinZip users is that the program is about to get even better, and the beta release of version 9 shows off a number of handy new features. This includes advanced encryption for securing your files, an 'Enhanced Deflate' compression option for further reduction in file sizes, and the ability to store data in Zip files of virtually unlimited size – something that should enable you to zip up your ripped DVDs in no time at all.

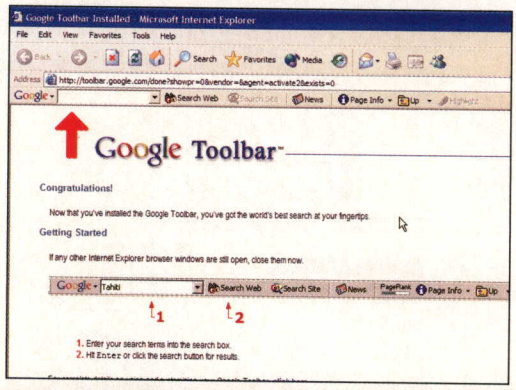


02 GOOGLE TOOLBAR 2.0

toolbar.google.com

As the most popular search engine in the world, many of us spend more time gazing at Google's search pages than looking at members of our close family. One of the best innovations since Mr Hovis starting slicing his first loaf is the Google Toolbar, which helps you streamline your searches and cut down on the number of trips you make to the Google home page. The toolbar can be downloaded and installed within minutes from the site, after which it will sit innocuously in the Internet Explorer toolbar, allowing you to search Google from wherever you may be online. Sure, it doesn't take that long to enter the legend 'www.google.com' into your browser toolbar, but the toolbar has a wealth of enhancements to make it more than worthwhile.

Such is the popularity of the utility that it has now reached a second edition, boasting even more enhancements than before. This roll-call of impressive talents includes pop-up blocking, auto form-filling and a unique 'BlogThis' feature which allows you to create a Web log post pointing to the page you're visiting. So the next time you want to find something fast on the Net, don't bother visiting searching pages – just call upon the Google Toolbar.


Google Toolbar
Congratulations!
Now that you've installed the Google Toolbar, you've got the world's best search at your fingertips.
Getting Started
If any other Internet Explorer browser windows are still open, close them now.
1. Enter your search terms into the search box.
2. Hit Enter or click the search button for results.

Time well spent

TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH THE TIME YOU'VE SAVED

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- Take up fishing by popping down to **www.go-fishing.co.uk**
- Become an expert in origami at **www.britishorigami.org.uk**
- Watch the *Cat in the Hat* trailer at **www.thecatinthehatmovie.com**
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- Learn how to defend yourself from a shark at **www.sharkattacks.com/protecting.htm**
- Become a private detective at **www.nig.co.uk/api/detective.html**

"Many of us spend more time gazing at Google's search pages than looking at our close family"

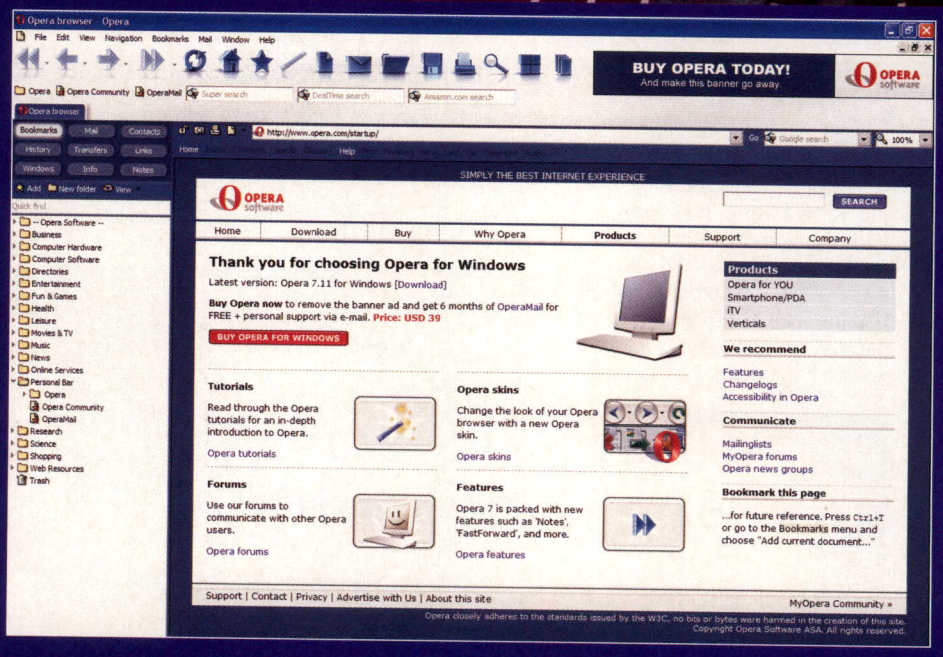
01 OPERA 7.11

www.opera.com

Whizzing into the top spot of our chart is Opera, a program which has shattered the mould of the browser to become arguably the fastest way to surf the Web. While Internet Explorer and Netscape have been slugging it out for years in the browser wars, Opera has quietly got on with the job of becoming the most streamlined browser around.

Its time-saving qualities are based around a combination of a small file size and a list of built-in utilities that promote effortless, speedy surfing. Its pioneering features include a multiple document interface for viewing several pages at once, a list of keyboard shortcuts as long as your phone bill, pop-up killing and integrated searching.

We're also big fans of Opera's 'mouse gestures' which allow you to navigate the Web simply by wiggling your mouse in a particular formation. If the boffins at Opera continue to come up with such innovative time-saving tools, we'll all have a lot more time to enjoy the Internet's vast riches. ■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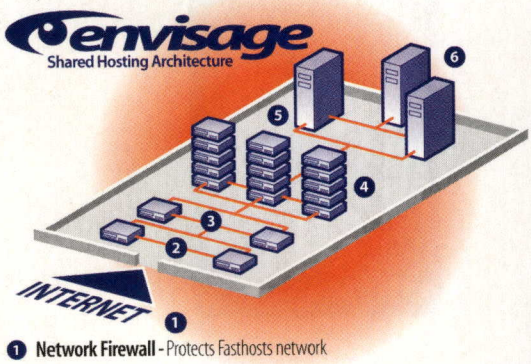

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4. **Redundant Web Servers** - Ensures delivery of site contents if one server fails
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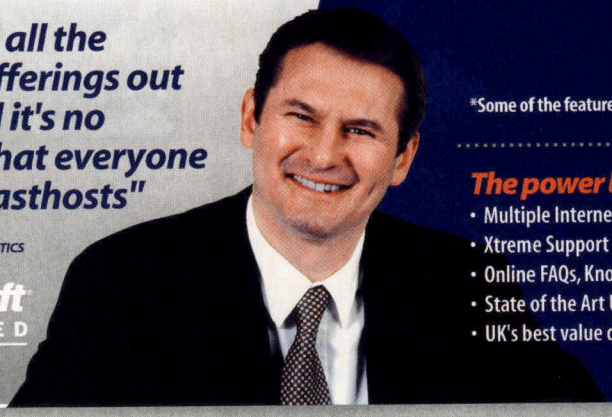

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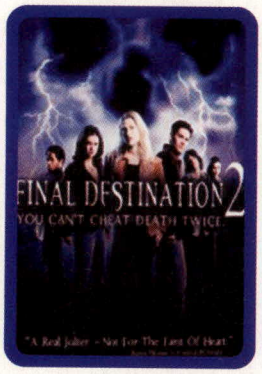

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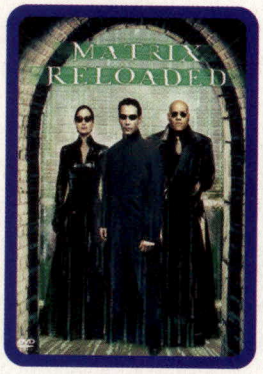

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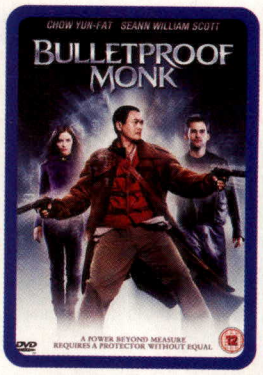

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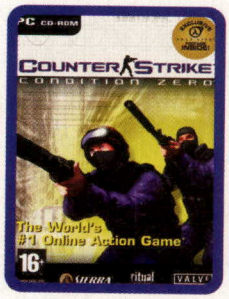

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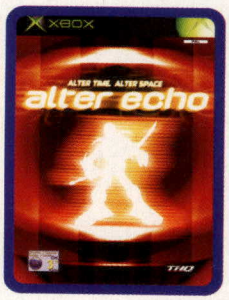

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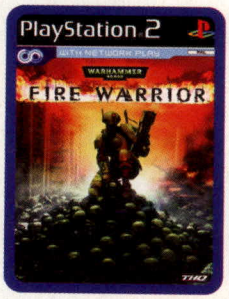

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TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WEB GRAPHICS WITH OUR TIPS – SEE PAGE 48

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO BUILD STUNNING SITES

Webmaster

■ IN-DEPTH FEATURES ■ STEP-BY-STEP WORKSHOPS ■ HAND-CODING MASTERCLASS

WELCOME...

WHAT'S UPPERMOST IN your mind when you start work on a Web project? For most of us, designing something that looks good is hugely important – nobody wants to create a site that looks like it's come from the early years of the Net. This means that we focus on graphics, to ensure the site looks perfect on our own PC.

But this causes one major problem – not everyone has the same PC setup. In fact, many people who access the Net don't use a PC. Making your site usable prevents much hassle and ensures that you value function over form. Check out our feature on p46 to find out how.

Thomas Watson, Editor

What's inside...

46 Designing for everyone
Usability should be high on your list of priorities. We show you why

48 Web graphics tips
Turn your digital images into works of art with our top graphics tips

50 Getting interactive with Dreamweaver
Create interactive rollovers and menus in Dreamweaver MX

54 Build a multimedia site
Learn how to add video and more with Flash MX and Dreamweaver MX

58 Create a Web database
More Web database shenanigans in the second part of our tutorial

62 Generate Acrobat PDFs
Fashion graphic-laden Web pages with the help of Adobe's latest tool

64 ASP message board
Bolt on an interactive message board in the second of our three-part guide

66 Create a mailing list
Keep in touch with clients – create a mailing list with PHP and MySQL

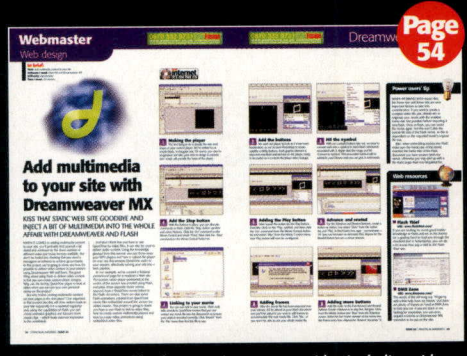
68 Web design Q&A
James Seabright is waiting to help you

Advanced

Dreamweaver MX special

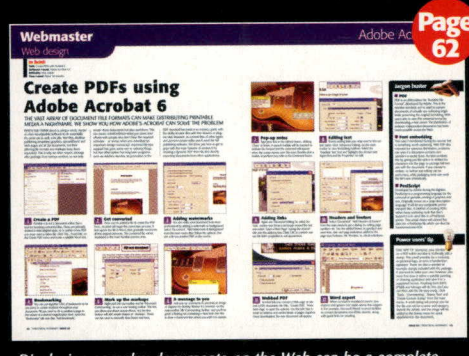
BUILD INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS AND INCORPORATE VIDEO ON YOUR SITE WITH DREAMWEAVER – PAGE 50

Also in Webmaster this issue...



Page 54

Don't get in a pickle the next time you consider including video on your Web site. Use our in-depth walkthrough to ensure you use the best of Flash and Dreamweaver for amazing results



Page 62

Displaying complex documents on the Web can be a complete nightmare with the vagaries of HTML, but Acrobat is here to help. We show how to create your own PDFs with the new version

Designing your Web pages for everyone

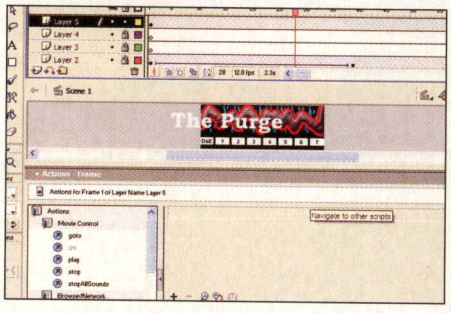
SO YOU WANT TO DESIGN A WEB PAGE? BUT HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE THAT YOUR WORK CAN BE VIEWED ON ALL PLATFORMS? **DARREN LOCK** INVESTIGATES

When the World Wide Web first eased itself into the public's consciousness, your average Web page was very different to the all-singing, all-dancing multimedia extravaganzas we're used to today. Most pages were put together using basic text formatting with only a single graphic used for a logo. And the graphics used were in 8-bit GIF format, because that was the recognised format of the time.

In those days Web design was a lot simpler, and you knew that whatever you did in your handwritten HTML code would look exactly the same if it was rendered in Mosaic or Netscape Navigator browsers. Then Microsoft's Internet Explorer, Macromedia Flash and frames arrived, and the life of the Web designer became increasingly difficult.

The temptation when designing a Web page is to just sit down and throw everything at the screen with no thought for those people out there who might be accessing the Web using antiquated equipment or a browser that cannot read your page. So what can you do to make everyone's Web experience a good one?

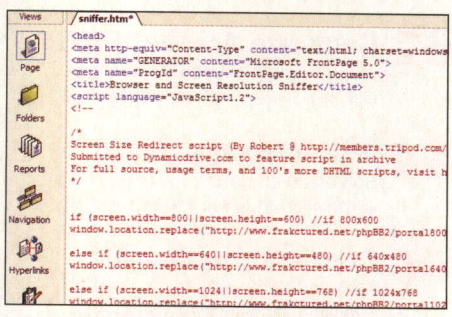
The first thing you should consider is what resolution to use when designing your Web site. While some of us have 21-inch monitors and operate at an eye-crunching 2048x1024 resolution, you would be surprised just how many folks still work at 800x600. You can blame Windows XP for this, because its default resolution is 800x600 (some Apple Macs default to this screen size too) and most people don't bother to tweak their PCs. So unless you absolutely need to have the extra space, try designing for an 800x600 screen.



Using Macromedia Flash can give your site a dynamic and fresh look, but remember to provide a link to the plug-in download

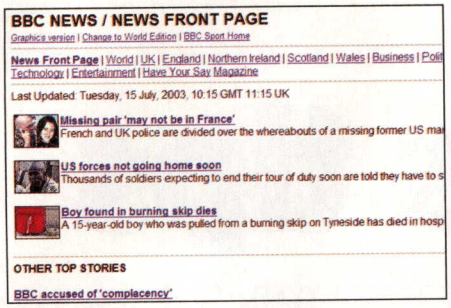
If you do feel the need to design for a bigger resolution, you can use a piece of code that acts as a resolution sniffer and diverts users, depending on their browsers and resolution, to a pre-programmed URL. Just type 'resolution sniffer' into Google and you can find a number of freeware codes that will enable you to do this.

And this brings us to another problem. Most resolution sniffer code is written using JavaScript, and some older browsers don't work with code written in this way. So if you want to use JavaScript applications, you must accept that a



Redirect users to your site with a piece of JavaScript called a Browser Sniffer. However, JavaScript can present its own problems

Designing pages for everyone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OTHER TOP STORIES
BBC accused of 'complacency'

Create a low-resolution 'text only' version of your site for maximum compatibility

If you want Apple Macs to access multimedia from your site, you may want to consider using QuickTime

small minority of your potential browsers won't be able to access this functionality. If you intend to have pop-up screens or a chat room, you may need to look for a non-JavaScript alternative for maximum compatibility. An option is to use DHTML (Dynamic Hypertext Markup Language), which has a greater chance of compatibility with older browsers and across computer platforms.

With a resolution sniffer gateway in place, you could design two or three different templates for your site and redirect your users accordingly. But of course this triples the amount of work you're going to do on your site, so unless you want the extra work it's better to nail the design the first time around. One quick tip is to use tables when designing sites, because no matter what the user's screen resolution, the table (if the width is set to a percentage) will adapt to it.

"UNLESS YOU WANT EXTRA WORK, IT'S BEST TO NAIL THE DESIGN FIRST TIME"

All the colours of the Web

In the past, there was a great deal of emphasis on how many colours were used in Web design, but as many of us now have high-spec 32-bit graphics cards, that problem has lessened. It's only a problem if you want your site to look uniform across a number of different platforms using different screen equipment. If you can bear it, reduce your graphics down to 16-bit colours (or even lower if you can). Not only will you increase the uniformity of your images but you'll also reduce the physical file size – increasing download speeds for those browsers who don't have a broadband connection.

If you intend to use frames when designing a site, you should be aware that there are still some old browsers out there that simply won't work with your design. Also, inline frames aren't used that often, but they aren't compatible with Netscape 4.7 and later. This old browser is still in use and will also not work with JavaScript or modern Flash animations.

When it comes to using Flash animations or any other plug-in on your site, always remember to include a link where the user can download the latest version of the plug-in software. This will reduce the amount of email you'll receive from visitors asking you how to get your Web site to work.

Multimedia is a growth area on the Net and we all want to add video and audio to our Web sites, but this can cause compatibility problems too. For example, Apple Mac computers aren't particularly fond of Windows Media, preferring their native Apple Quicktime format for delivery of audio and video files. If you do intend to include multimedia files on your site, give your browsers the choice of the native format for their particular platform.

Before you go live with your Web site, you should test it using as many different browsers and platforms as you can. Of course, this can be difficult if you only have the one PC, so get your friends involved or use the Mac computers at work to test your site.

Of course, the easiest way to make sure your site is compatible with all browsers is to create a text-only version and label this on your site. When creating a text-only site, strip out all the elements that may cause problems with browsers. Don't use frames, and rely on the most basic of HTML to recreate your site. This way, if anyone does complain that it doesn't work for them, you can politely refer them to the text-only site.

Geek speak

DHTML
This is an enhanced version of HTML which enables a Web page to react dynamically to the input of the user, and because it's based on HTML it is compatible with a wide range of browsers.

JavaScript
A scripting language developed by Netscape to allow Web developers to add interactive content to their Web sites. It is supported by most browsers, although Internet Explorer uses a different version called 'Jscript', and because of its open source nature sometimes independently developed JavaScript code can have problems.

Screen resolution
When you connect your computer to your monitor, you can set the screen resolution according to your taste. The average resolution is 800x600, but there are higher screen resolutions that reduce the size of the desktop elements, giving a larger perceived screen area for you to work with.

Macromedia Flash
An animation format that is browser independent and based on vector graphic technology. As long as the user's browser is equipped with the correct plug-in, these Flash animations should function and look the same. However, older browsers and new versions of Flash are known to have compatibility issues.

Plug-in
This is a software module that 'plugs in' to your browser and enables you to run a number of different multimedia formats. If you want to run Macromedia Flash or Shockwave or media files such as Quicktime, you will need to download and install the correct browser plug-in.

Bookmarks

NAME: Beginners Tutorials
URL: tutorials.beginners.co.uk/read/id/41
This is a short article looking at some of the issues that we've mentioned in this feature. There are some good tips to try, and it covers issues such as basic design and testing your site.

NAME: AnyBrowser
URL: www.anybrowser.org
This is a Web campaign that wants a non-browser-specific World Wide Web, and is aimed primarily at Mac users who feel left out in this Microsoft Internet Explorer-dominated Internet. There's also a design guide and many more useful links.

NAME: The Web Standards Project
URL: www.webstandards.org
If you want the lowdown on Web standards, check out this site. There's plenty of advice, tips and interviews with experts. It's a bit highbrow but will give you a good grounding in Web design and help you appreciate some of the issues involved.

Web graphics tips

WANT TO CREATE STUNNING WEB GRAPHICS BUT NOT SURE HOW? **DARREN LOCK** GIVES YOU A HELPING HAND WITH THESE ESSENTIAL TIPS

1 Layer it on

When creating Web graphics, one of the most important techniques to get to grips with is layers. The most popular image editors (PhotoShop, Paint Shop Pro and Fireworks) all allow you to use layers when creating images. Layers are a bit like transparent film on which you can draw your digital elements and move these elements around, and also manipulate them, all without harming the final image. These composite graphics are very flexible and allow the user to come up with alternative designs and colour schemes without having to completely redraw the original image. If you are serious about graphic design, investigate layers fully and see what they can do for you.

2 Choose your weapon

Decide on a format and design with the limitations of that format in mind. For example, if you are going to use your image editor to create JPEG graphics, you will tend to create physically larger files than if you used the GIF format. Also, you won't be able to use GIF's transparency functions either, which is quite a limitation if you are creating buttons. Conversely, if you want to generate photo-realistic images with inbuilt compression functionality, then design with JPEG in mind. So before you sit down and create your graphic, give some thought to what you what your graphic to do for you. Is it a Web button or a logo or a photograph? Then think about the format and what implications this has on your overall design.

3 Always think big

When you sit down to create a Web graphic from scratch, it is always a good idea to think big and use the largest canvas and working space that your monitor can accommodate. This way, you can create complicated and layered graphics with ease. Then you can reduce and resize the final image when it is complete, ensuring that you have crisp detailed graphics. When resizing your image (and this applies to all image editors) always try and resize by using a bicubic resampling filter, which is the most reliable filter to use as it doesn't create any distortions. Of course, don't feel that you are bound to this advice – you are free to experiment with any other scaling methods which may happen to suit your purpose.

4 Basil's brush

Know your brushes – it sounds daft but if you are using PhotoShop, Paint Shop Pro or Fireworks, there are a multitude of great brushes and effects that can be used for painting. Take some time to know which brush creates which effect. It might take some time to become acclimatised, but in the future you will know exactly what each style of brush does. Of course, you don't necessarily have to be limited by the brushes that are provided by your software. You can create your own custom brushes to use too, and have your own special paintbox on hand.

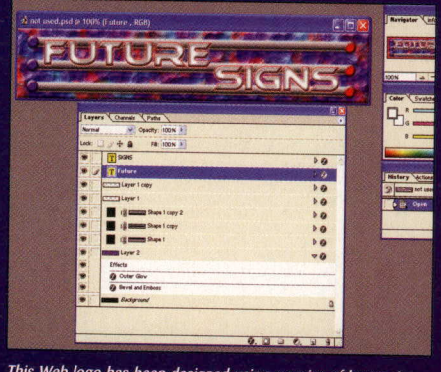
5 I can see right through you

Another important technique to think about is using the opacity settings in your photo editor when you're working with layers. By carefully adjusting the opacity settings in your levels, you can create seamless transitions and ghostly effects. PhotoShop is particularly powerful when working with layers, and allows you to use a number of customisable layer effects which are very effective when working with buttons, logos and fonts.

6 Simple text is best

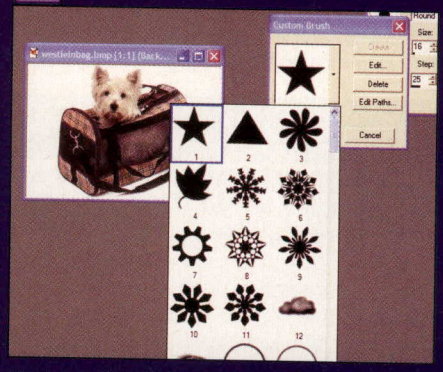
When using fonts, try and use sans-serif fonts for logos, although if you do want to use a serif font make absolutely sure that it is legible. The temptation is to throw a fancy font at the screen in order to make an impact, but this can be a double-edged

1



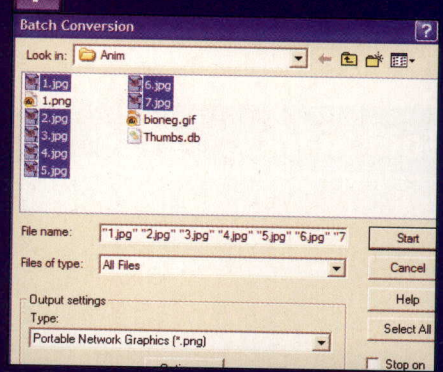
This Web logo has been designed using a series of layers. It pays to find out exactly what layers can do for you

4



Most image editors have loads of custom brushes to play with – you just have to look for them

7



The Batch command can be a real godsend when dealing with multiple files

sword. There comes a point in every designer's life when they have to make a trade-off between something that looks stunning but can't be read, and something that looks merely sensible but can be read. So test out the font at different resolutions and ask other people's opinions before committing yourself. The acid test is holding up your logo at its smallest resolution and simply asking: "What does that say?" If they get it right, you've succeeded.

7 Batch me if you can

If you're likely to need to convert a number of images from one file format to another, then you should be made aware of the Batch command which is to be found in most popular image editors. Using this command, you are able to select the images you want to be converted and the file type that you want them to be converted to. With a single press of the mouse button, all these files will be transformed from one format to another. If you are lucky enough to be a PhotoShop user, you can take advantage of its Automated Commands function – which enables you to create your own custom command sets and batch processes.

8 Restless natives

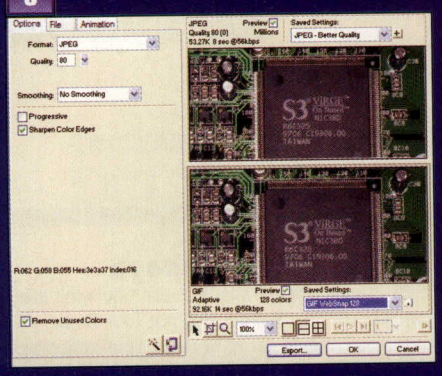
When you have finished designing your image, always remember to save it in your image editor's native format. This way you will be preserving any layer, editing and history information, letting you go back to your original design and make any modifications without fear of losing any precious information. To create a Web-ready final image, always remember to flatten your composite graphic (or save without layers) and resize it to the specifications that you require.

9 Follow the wizard

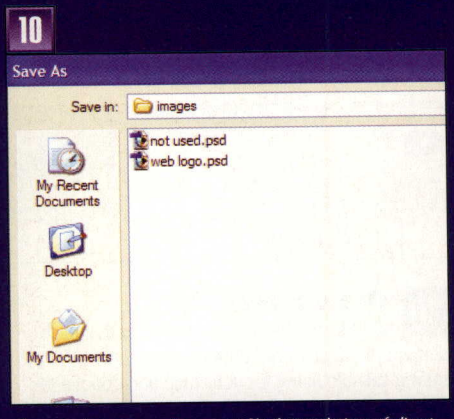
When it comes to saving your final image, take advantage of your image editor's built-in Web Graphics wizard. Both PhotoShop and Fireworks have such wizards and make the export of graphics a breeze. In PhotoShop, click on 'File', 'Save for Web' to open the wizard. You will be presented with a Before and After window to see just how your compression options will look when they appear on the screen. In Fireworks, click 'File', 'Export Wizard' and this will take you through a number of menus, helping you decide the file format, before presenting an Export Preview window that is similar to its PhotoShop counterpart. Both these wizards allow you to adjust the compression ratio involved and give you a greater control over the size of your final image.

10 What a save!

This last tip is more about good housekeeping than anything else. Always remember to save your work at regular intervals, because you never know what problems might arise to conspire against you and lose your work. If you can, save your work at regular stages so that you have various prototype designs available should one of them become lost or corrupted. When using fonts, always make sure they are saved on a separate disc or CD-R because a common problem is to design a logo, then upgrade your computer only to find that your original designs are redundant because you can't find that particular font. This also goes for any clipart or elements you might be using in your designs. So basically, save everything and make sure that everything you use is catalogued and preserved for future reference, because you never know when you might need something.

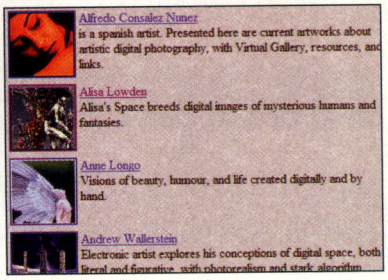


Using a 'before and after' file wizard makes using file compression a lot easier on the eye



Always make sure you store every file, font and piece of clipart you use – otherwise you might be sorry

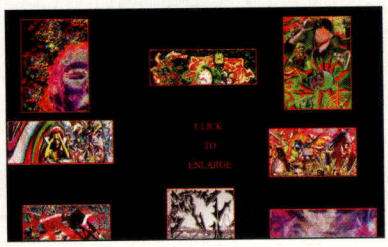
Web resources


Alfredo Consalez Nunez
is a spanish artist. Presented here are current artworks about artistic digital photography, with Virtual Gallery, resources, and links.
Alisa Lowden
Alisa's Space breeds digital images of mysterious humans and fantasies.
Anne Longo
Visions of beauty, humour, and life created digitally and by hand.
Andrew Wallerstein
Electronic artist explores his conceptions of digital space, both

Art on the Net

www.art.net/studios/digital.html

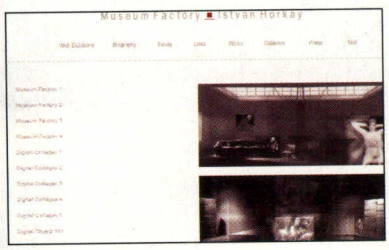
If you want to get a good idea of exactly what you can achieve using a computer and digital imaging software, head over to the Art on the Net Web site. The site itself is divided into various sections covering all forms of art and there is even a digital section.



Digital Graffiti for the People

www.users.ties2.net/~blex

While most graffiti artists tend to target train stations, public toilets and so on, this cunning fellow creates his own digital graffiti on the Net. These virtual canvasses are bold, bright and engaging, and look just as good on a monitor as on any of the urban art galleries mentioned above.



Istvan Horkay

www.horkay.com

This Hungarian artist presents his very own Museum Factory of digital collages and found art. His works incorporate many other artistic works and styles, and are visually striking despite their predominantly monochrome presentation. The site is also well designed and good-looking, which is often not the case with artists presenting their work on the Net.

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In brief:
Task: Using image maps and rollovers
Software I need: Dreamweaver MX
Difficulty: It's not that difficult
Time I need: About 40 minutes

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

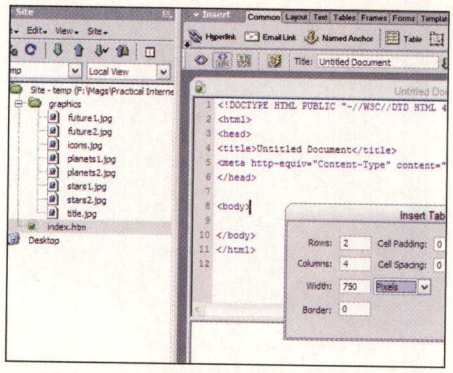
Power guide to image maps and rollovers

IMAGE MAPS AND ROLLOVERS TRADITIONALLY REQUIRE SOME COMPLEX CODING BUT **CHRIS SCHMIDT** PREFERS TO USE DREAMWEAVER, MAKING THE PROCESS MUCH EASIER

UNLESS YOU ENJOY sitting up late coding HTML, there's no benefit to creating many common Web page components like image maps and rollover graphics by hand. Their purpose is well known to most of us, but without apps like Dreamweaver, the process of creating such objects relies on intensive HTML and JavaScript coding.

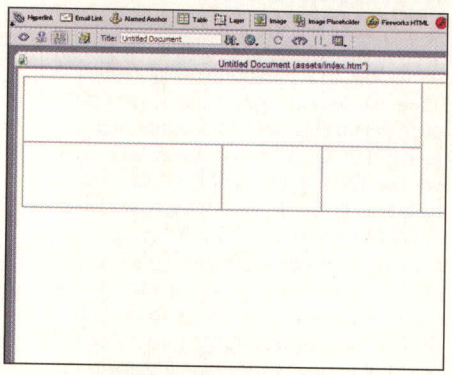
Using Dreamweaver we can improve on these features by associating behaviours where needed to create quite complex effects that would add to the coding headache. You'll need to prepare your page design and create the necessary graphic assets in advance, but if you copy the required files from the cover CD you'll be able to walk through the process to recreate our navigation bar for a fictitious astrology site.

We chose the astrology theme, as the star, planet and telescope shapes can illustrate the polygon, circle and rectangle shapes which image mapping supports, and the primary navigation will provide the rollover effect as text highlights.



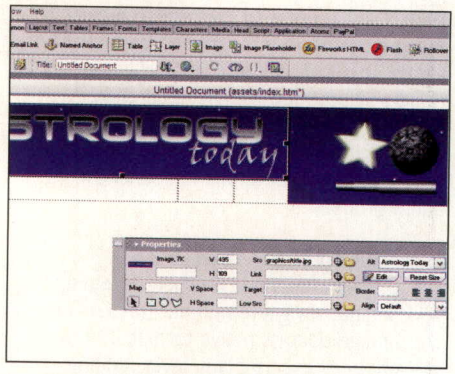
1 Launch a new page

To recreate our navigation, copy the required images from the cover CD into a graphics folder on your site. Create and open a new page, placing a table of two rows and four columns at a width of 750 pixels.



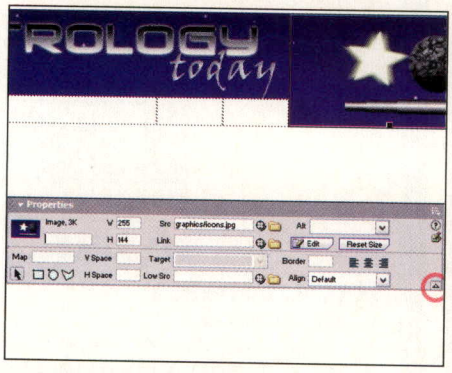
2 Column inches

Merge the first three columns of the first row and both cells in column four to make a single column. The screenshot above shows the borders set to '1' to illustrate the divisions clearly, but leave these set to their default '0' setting.



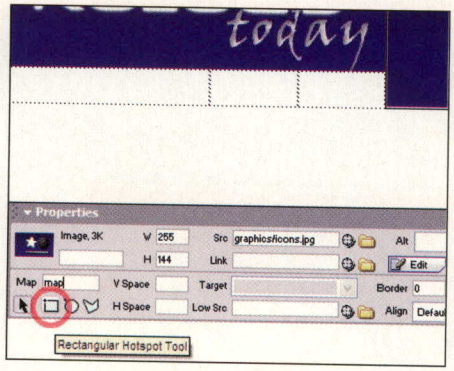
3 Add a title

Insert the 'title.jpg' graphic into the spanned cell in row one along with suitable alternate text content (Alt), and 'icons.jpg' into the fourth column. The remaining cells will be populated in the next sections as we create the rollover functions.



4 Panel beating

We'll now apply image map data to the graphic containing the site icons. Select this and examine the 'Properties' panel. If only the basic panel is available (ie 'Map' options are missing in the lower left corner) click the arrowhead at the bottom right.



5 Draw a rectangle

Our design has been planned so that each element provides a link. With the image still selected, enter a suitable name for your map and choose the 'Rectangular Hotspot Tool' from the Properties panel. Drag a shape to contain the telescope part of the pic.

6 Resizing the shape

If your original shape doesn't quite hit the mark, choose the 'Pointer Hotspot Tool' in the Properties Panel to resize or move your generated shape, either using the corner anchor points or by dragging the main body.

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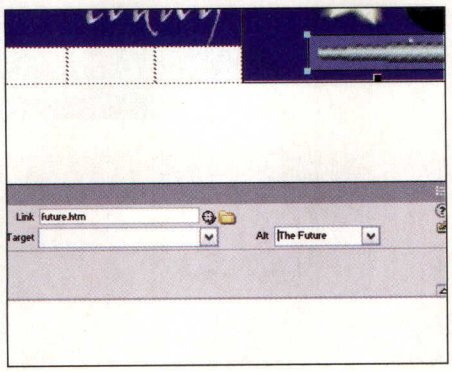
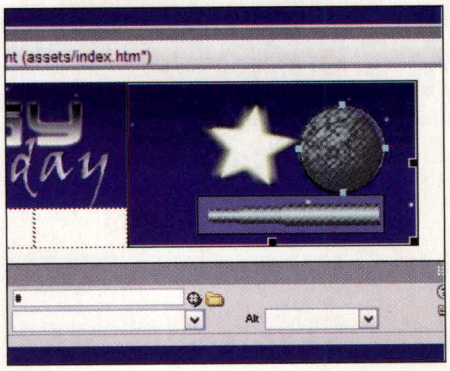


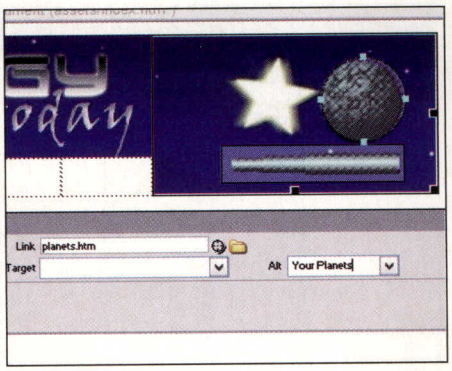
7 Add a link

With the hotspot selection still active, turn again to the Properties Panel from where you can adjust the link location from its default hash (#) value to an actual location, as well as amending the Target location and alternate text values.



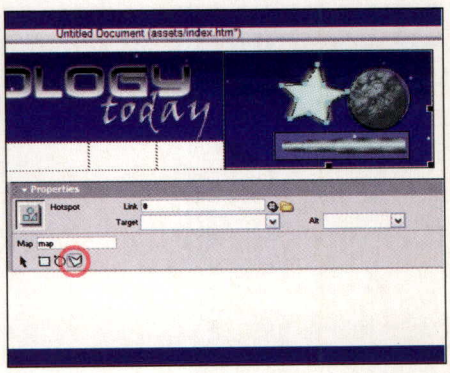
8 The oval

Repeat the process with the 'Oval Hotspot Tool' to enclose the planet graphic, again making use of the 'Pointer Hotspot Tool' for adjustment. Try not to overlap the rectangle containing the telescope, or problems may occur with the end result.



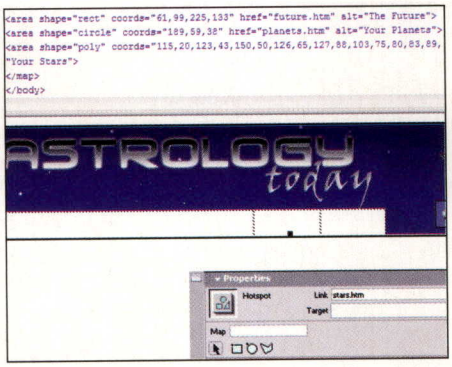
9 Oval attributes

As we did for the telescope hotspot, enter the info to link the circle shape to its intended location along with any alternate text and target attributes if required. Alternate text is important for usability but the target field can be left blank if necessary.



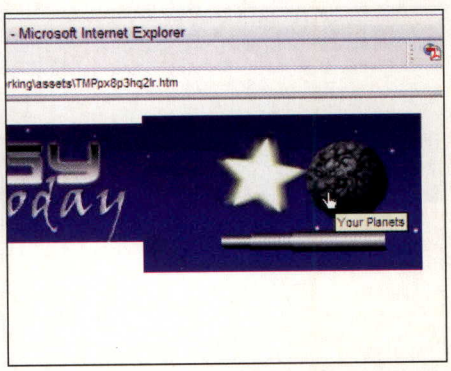
10 Stars in your eyes

The star provides a more complex shape, for which the 'Polygon Hotspot Tool' provides the necessary flexibility. Select this and click on the star's corner points, working round the object to create the corresponding hotspot shape.



11 Charting the stars

Complete the hotspots attributes with link locations, alternate text and target info, and save the file. If you look at the HTML you'll see how the co-ordinates of your hotspots have been automatically calculated, and saved along with the defined info.



12 Previewing the image map

Preview the page to test your image map. If all is working as planned, the three objects should act as links and provide alternative text as bubble tips when the mouse is held over each area, while the browser's status bar will display the links' location.

Jargon buster

Hotspot

A hotspot is the term that defines an area that has been mapped to serve as a link within your image map. Image maps provide tools to recreate almost any shape with rectangles and circles for basic shapes, and the Polygon option to encase more complex objects.

Hash (#) link

Dreamweaver will insert a hash symbol as the location for any hotspots you create. This normally precedes an internal link, ie to another location on the same page, and is a useful method of allowing link behaviours to be generated on development pages even if the ultimate location is as yet unknown.

Target

A link's target attribute specifies which browser window a linked page will open in. The four reserved constant values all preceded by an underscore are '_blank' for a new window, '_parent' to replace the current frames setting, '_self' to load inside a given window or frameset, and '_top' to override any inherited framesets.

Power users' tip

YOU CAN TAKE advantage of the empty hash link defined by default to associate more complex actions to your hotspots. For example, leave the hash link in place and select the hotspot, then access Dreamweaver's 'Behaviors' palette to create such effects as opening a new and sized browser window directly from the image map. There are many behaviours that can be associated in this way as the hotspot is fundamentally a simple link, although hand coding JavaScript to integrate with an image map is something best left to seasoned coders… or the casual Dreamweaver user.

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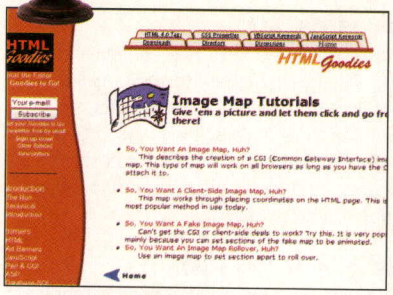
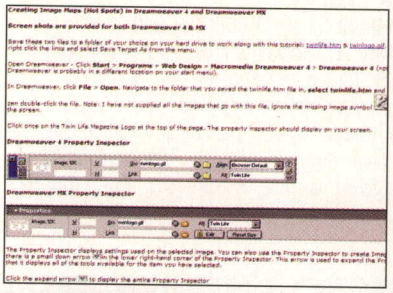
Web resources



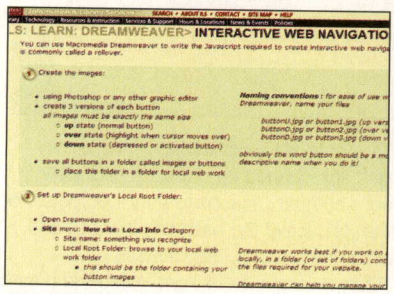
HTML Goodies
www.htmlgoodies.com/tutors/im.html

The HTML Goodies site has been dishing out words of wisdom for years, and you'd be hard-pressed to find a better, more comprehensive site that provides coding advice in such a friendly and understandable way.



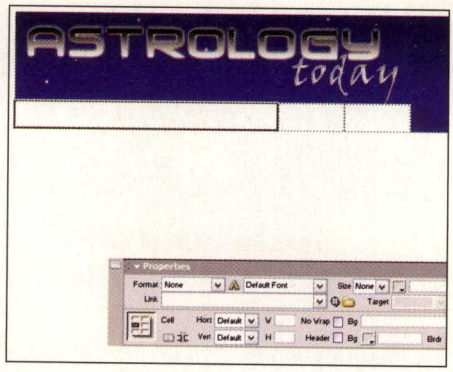
TinkerTech
www.tinkertech.net/tutor/imagemap

Some good practical advice with specific reference to Dreamweaver can be found here. Check this out if you need a clearer idea of how the interface elements should look as you develop your image maps.



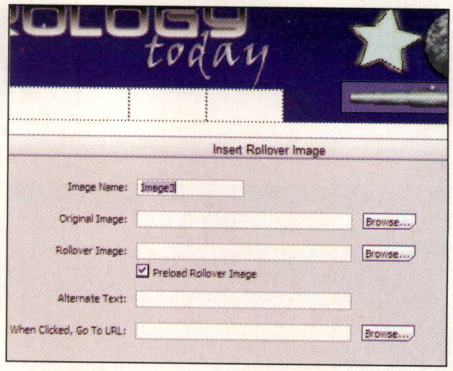
Bates ILS
abacus.bates.edu/ils/learn/web/rollovers

For advice on how Dreamweaver handles various navigation elements such as rollovers and the navigation bar feature, take a trip to this site for information on configuration options.



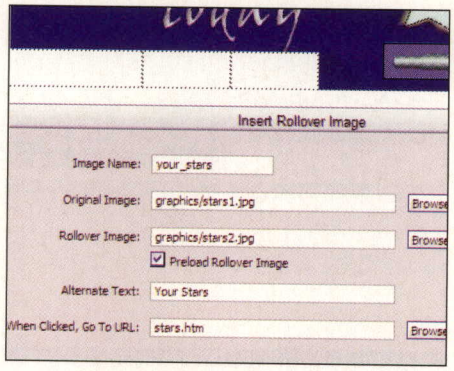
13 Roll with it

Each of the empty cells on the second row will contain their own rollover button that displays a second image when the mouse passes over the original image. Place the cursor in the first empty cell on the table's second row.



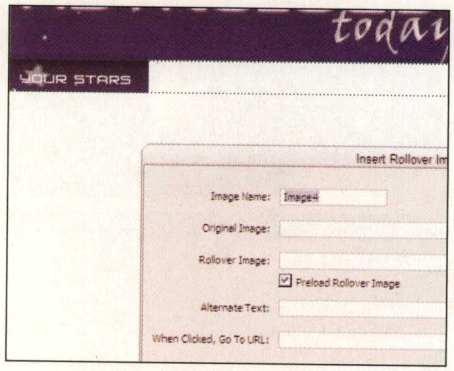
14 Common as muck

Next, choose the 'Common' tab of the Insert bar if this isn't already visible, and click on the 'Rollover Image' button to prompt the automated Wizard approach to embedding this common feature.



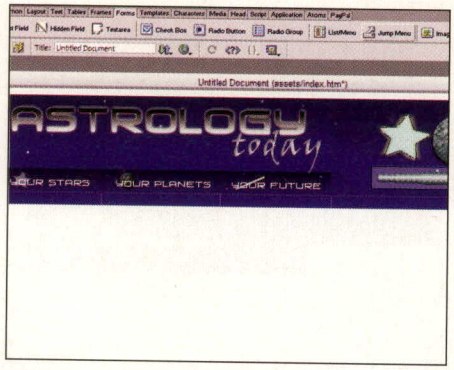
17 Set up the links

The final stage required by the dialog box is the actual location of the page that your button will divert users to. You can use the 'Browse' button to locate a relative location or type in an absolute address if necessary for external links.



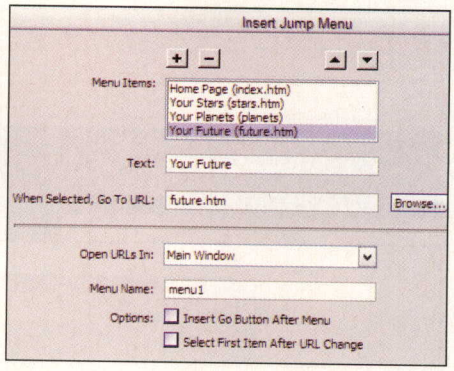
18 Switching cells

Click 'OK' to return to your page with the feature in place. If your remaining cells are squashed together place the cursor after the 'Your Stars' button, hit the tab key to move into the next cell and again select the 'Rollover Image' option from the Insert bar.



21 Add another row

You can further add to your navigation by adding a third row to the table and sampling a suitable colour to act as a background. Now position the cursor in the right-hand cell and choose the 'Forms' tab of the Insert bar.



22 Might as well jump

Click the 'Jump Menu' option and create names for each of your links under the Text field followed by link destinations. Click the '+' symbol to add new entries and amend the lower options if required before clicking 'OK' to return to your page.

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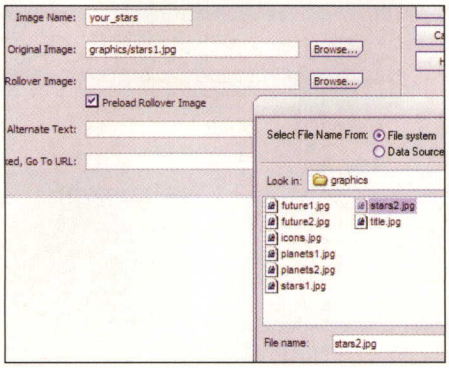
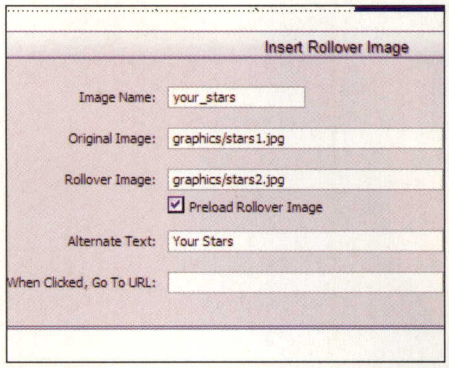


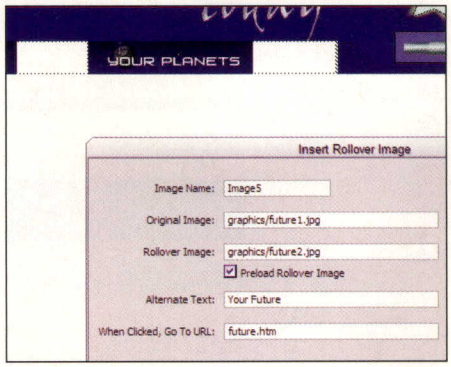
15 Stargazing

The Image Name field can be left with its unique name, but you may choose to alter this if you think you might delve into the HTML in future. Use the corresponding 'Browse' buttons to locate 'stars1.jpg' and 'stars2.jpg' for the original and rollover fields.



16 Change display text

Leave the 'Preload Rollover Image' option checked. This will speed up the effect when viewed online, as the rollover state image will already be cached and provide an alternate text display to aid your site's accessibility for users with screenreaders.

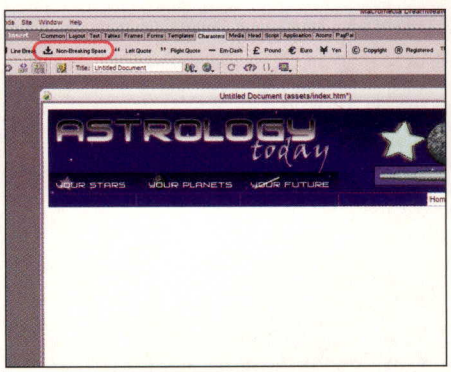


19 Out of this world

Repeat the process for 'Your Planets', making use of the 'planets1.jpg' and 'planets2.jpg' files for the respective 'Original Image' and 'Rollover Image' fields, and complete the remaining field before clicking 'OK' to do the same for the final 'Your Future' button.

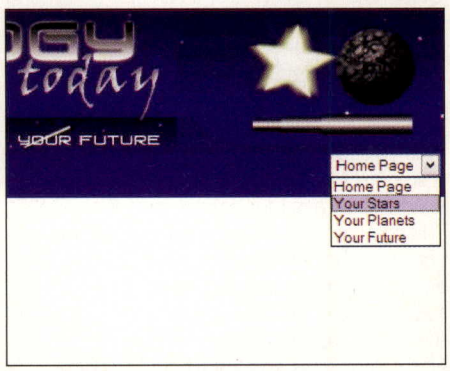
20 Preview the page

Once completed, save your navigation and preview the page in the browser. The navigation should display the alternate images when the mouse is passed over each button, along with the alternate text as bubble tips, as we saw in the map area earlier.



23 Spaced out

We right-aligned the contents of the holding cell to improve on the positioning of our new object, followed by a few non-breaking space characters (in the Characters tab of the Insert bar) to provide some natural breathing space from the right-hand margin.



24 The final frontier

Save the file and check out the results in the browser. You'll see you have a navigation bar that incorporates three different methods of navigation, which should provide visitors with some obvious methods of finding their way around your site.

Jargon buster

Button states

An object's state is determined by an event such as mouse interaction. When creating button graphics like rollovers, its initial state is considered 'Up'. When the mouse passes over, it reverts to 'Over' state and when the mouse is clicked it enters the 'Down' state.

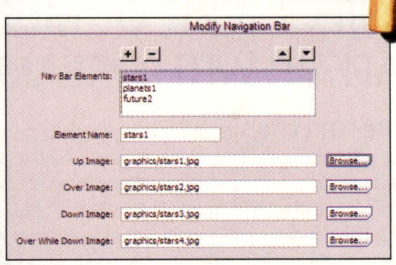
Cached images

The 'Preload Rollover Image' option will deliver the rollover graphic along with the HTML page to be stored in the browser's storage cache. If this were to be deselected the rollover effect would still operate, but the browser would need to request the secondary image from the server, causing a delay in the effect working.

Absolute and relative links

If a link's location is entered complete with the http:// prefix it is considered to be absolute, as this provides everything needed for the browser to locate the specified file. A relative link, on the other hand, locates a page depending on its location in relation to the referencing page.

Power users' tip



DREAMWEAVER PROVIDES VARIOUS navigational items that can be easily configured and put into place through the Insert bar. Our rollover navigation could have been constructed through the dedicated Navigation Bar option which supports additional image states for 'Down' and 'Over While Down' states.

The only problem with this particular feature is that only one instance can be contained on a page, so the more common rollover effect we've looked at through our main tutorial is probably the more flexible option. However, with its increased button states and centralised future editing capabilities, the Navigation bar element should not be ignored.

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In brief:
Task: Add multimedia content to your site
Software I need: Flash MX and Dreamweaver MX
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 45 minutes

Add multimedia to your site with Dreamweaver MX

KISS THAT STATIC WEB SITE GOODBYE AND INJECT A BIT OF MULTIMEDIA INTO THE WHOLE AFFAIR WITH DREAMWEAVER AND FLASH

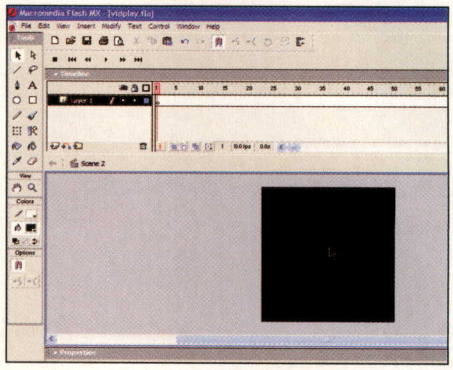
WHEN IT COMES to adding multimedia content to your site, you'll probably find yourself a bit dazed and confused by the sheer number of different video and music formats available. But don't be fooled into thinking that you need a menagerie of software to achieve good results. In this project, we're going to show you how it's possible to deliver video content to your visitors using Dreamweaver MX and Flash. The great thing about using Flash to deliver video content is that you can create custom player designs. Why use the boring QuickTime player to look at video when you can put your own personal stamp on the project?

But why bother putting multimedia content on your pages in the first place? One argument is that content like this will draw visitors back to your site (especially if it is updated regularly) and, using the capabilities of Flash, you can create animated graphics and banners from movie clips – which looks damned impressive to the uninitiated.

And don't think that you have to use QuickTime for video files; it can also be used to deliver audio content. Using the knowledge gleaned from this tutorial, you can throw away your MP3 players and have a custom file player on your site that streams QuickTime audio to your viewers, effectively turning your site into a Web jukebox.

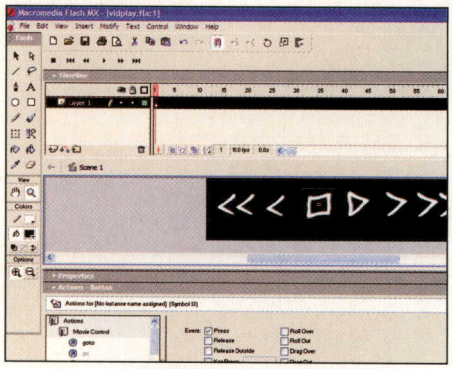
In our example, we've created a fictional promotional page for a musician's Web site. The custom video player positioned at the centre of the screen was created using Flash, and plays three separate music videos, sourced from a QuickTime movie linked to the Flash document. There are also some Flash animations created from QuickTime movie files embedded around the screen for added impact. This project is going to teach you how to use Flash to link to video files, how to create custom multimedia players and how to create video animations using embedded video files.

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD



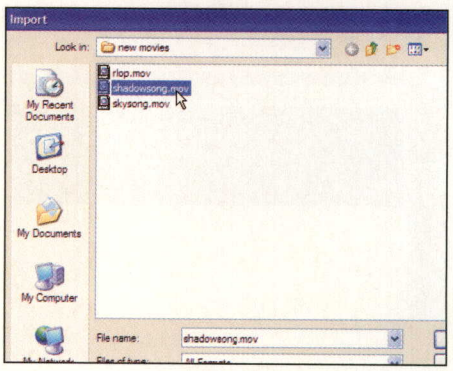
1 Making the player

The first thing to do is decide the size and shape of your custom player. We've settled for a simple black, rectangular one. Of course, you can be imaginative and take your time to design a custom skin, which will provide the basis of the player.



4 Add the Stop button

With the buttons in place, you can allocate commands to them. Click the 'Stop' button symbol and select 'Actions'. Click the 'On' command under Movie Control and check 'Press'. Now click the 'Stop' command on the Movie Control Action list.



7 Linking to your movie

You can now link to your movie. Flash only links directly to QuickTime movies (but you can embed any movie file into the document) so ensure your video is encoded correctly. Click 'Import' from the 'File' menu then find the file to use.

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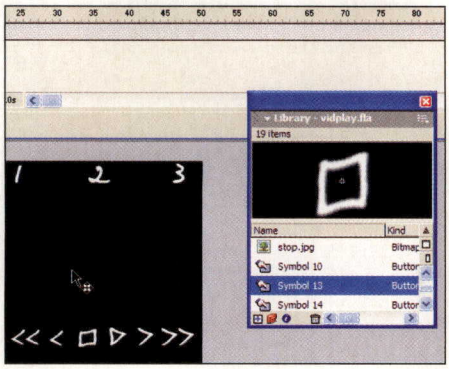
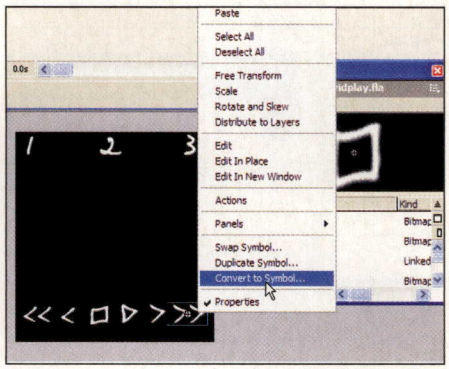


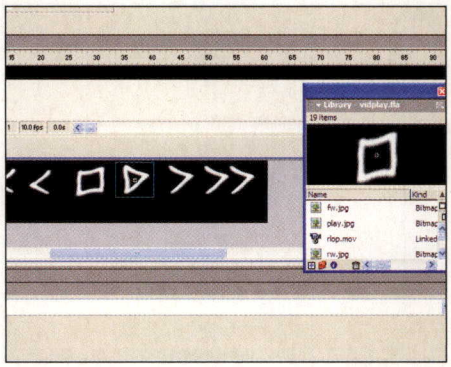
2 Add the buttons

We want our player to look as if it has been handwritten, so we've used Photoshop to create suitably scribbly buttons. Each graphic element is imported into Flash and laid out on the player, ready to be coded so it controls the linked video footage.



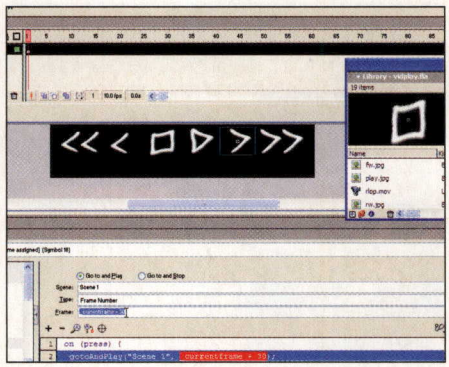
3 Hit the symbol

With our custom buttons laid out, we need to convert each into a symbol to have Flash commands associated with it. Right-click the image and hit 'Convert to Symbol'. The associated symbol will be added to your Library and you can give it commands.



5 Adding the Play button

Now repeat the action for the Play button. Basically, click on the 'Play' symbol, and then click the 'On' command from the Movie Control Action list and select 'Play' from the Movie Control menu. Your Play button will now be configured.



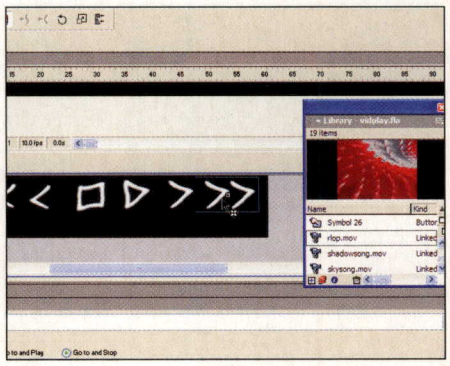
6 Advance and rewind

For the Advance and Rewind buttons, create a button as before, but select 'Goto' from the Action list, and 'Play'. In the Frame box, type '_currentframe + 30' (you can increase or decrease this). Repeat for the Rewind button but use a minus amount.

Macromedia Flash
This video requires 2803 frames to display its entire length. The selected timeline span is not long enough. Do you want the required number of frames automatically inserted into the timeline span?
Don't show me this message again.
Yes
No

8 Adding frames

After the movie file has been imported into your Library, it'll be placed in your Flash document and you'll be asked if you want to add frames to accommodate this new media file. Click 'Yes', or you won't be able to see your whole media file.



9 Adding more buttons

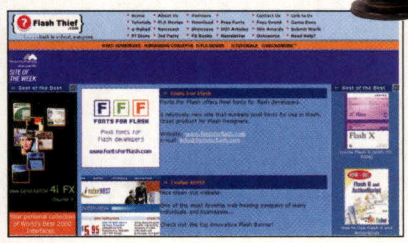
Add the code to the Fast-forward and Rewind buttons. Create a button as in step five, but pick 'Goto' from the Movie Action and 'Stop' from the Selection screen. Enter the last frame number of the movie into the Frame entry box. Repeat for 'Rewind' but enter '0'.

Power users' tip

WHEN WORKING WITH movie files, the frame size and frame rate are very important factors to take into consideration. If you want to create a compact video file, you should aim to originate your movie with the smallest frame rate size possible before importing it into Flash. Once in Flash, you can resize the movie again, but this won't alter the overall file size of the Flash movie, as this is dependent on the imported movie's original file size.

Also, when embedding movies into Flash make sure the frame rate of the movie matches the frame rate of the Flash document you have created (and vice versa), otherwise you may end up with a file that's larger than you bargained for.

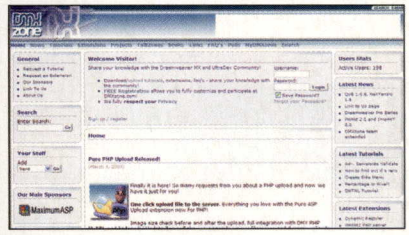
Web resources



Flash Thief

URL: www.flashthief.com/

If you are looking for some good insider knowledge of Flash and are in the market for a guiding hand to lead you through the minefield that is ActionScript, you can do a lot worse than pay a visit to the Flash Thief site.



DMX Zone

URL: www.dmxzone.com/

The words of the old song say, 'I'll get by with a little help from my friends' and there are plenty of friends on hand at DMX Zone to help you out. If you are stuck or are looking for inspiration, you can even request a tutorial or Dreamweaver MX extension to be put on the site.

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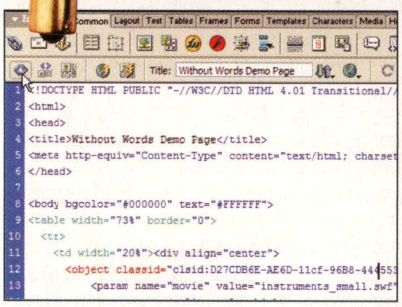
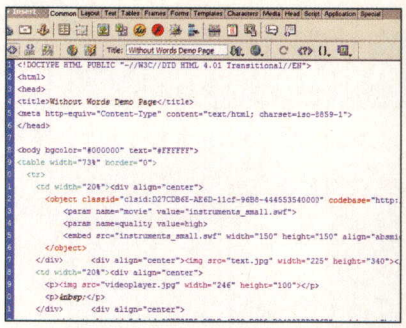
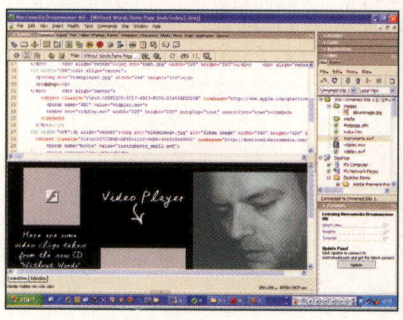
Power users' tips



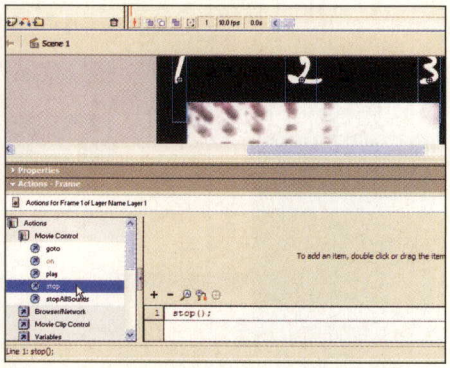
Dreamweaver has a semi-WYSIWYG-editing screen where you can move elements of your site around using the mouse. But when things aren't looking quite right, it is better to access the HTML code. You can do this by clicking on the 'Show Code' view button on the top menu bar.



In Code view, you can see the bare HTML code running down the screen. So that you aren't dazzled by the sheer amount of code, Dreamweaver MX adds line numbers to the code and colours the many different HTML tag elements, eg table elements are colour-coded in cyan while objects are red.

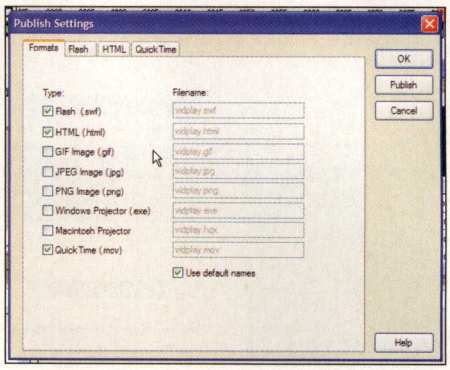


If all that HTML code gets to be too much, you can switch back again by using the Show Design view at the top of the menu. However, it might be a better idea to use the Code and Design view mode, which pulls up the code and WYSIWYG windows at the same time. However, you really need a large monitor and a high screen resolution to make best use of this function!



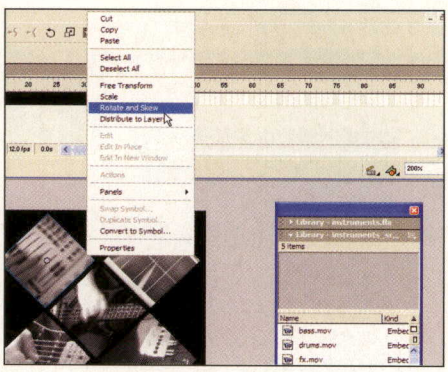
10 Make it stop

If you publish your file like this, it'll play when it loads on the page and return to the beginning when it reaches the end of the movie. If this happens there's no point having a navigation system, so add a Movie Control 'Stop' action at the first and last frames.



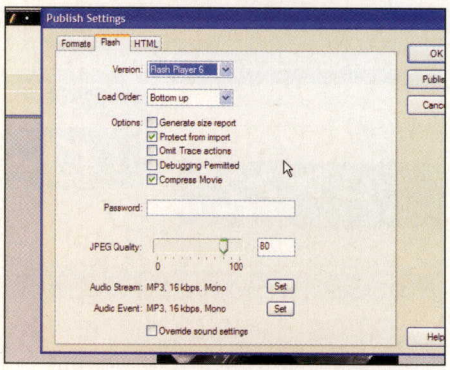
11 Ready to publish

Your Flash movie is ready to be published. Click 'File', 'Publish Settings' and save the Flash, HTML and QuickTime movie. On the Flash settings screen, select 'Flash 4' player. Adjust the QuickTime settings and hit 'Publish'. Your player is now ready.



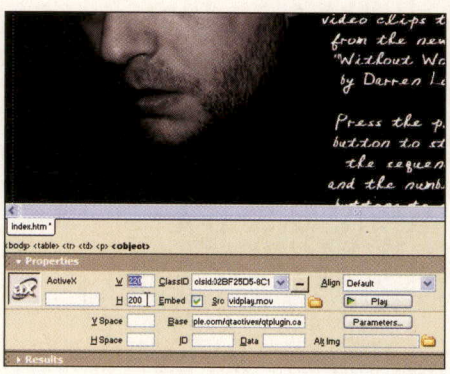
14 Manipulate the clip

The Free Transform tool lets you distort and skew the video clip into a variety of shapes. It also lets you alter the frame size of the clip. Using this technique, we have created a video mosaic with our video clips that will add some dynamism to our page.



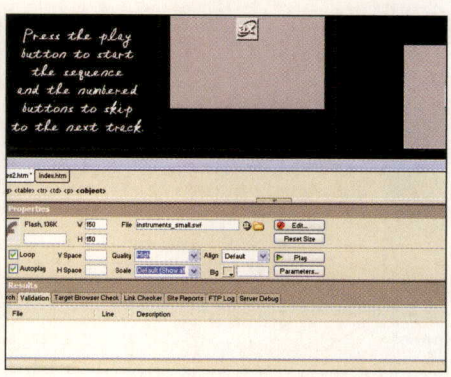
15 Save the Flash movie

With the clips manipulated and correctly placed, you can export it as a Flash file. When you save a linked movie file it creates a QuickTime movie; when you embed a video file it's transformed into a Flash animation/movie. Save the file in Flash 6 format.



18 Change the size

Your movie may not always appear at its right size when using fiXMovie, so you may need to adjust the size properties to compensate. Click the 'ActiveX' object; under 'Properties' enter the size of the movie. It'll be corrected the next time you preview the page.



19 Inserting Flash movies

When it comes to inserting the Flash movies (see steps 12-15 for a reminder), you can just drag and drop them from the File menu onto your Web template. Using the various tools, the Flash movies can be resized and positioned to taste.

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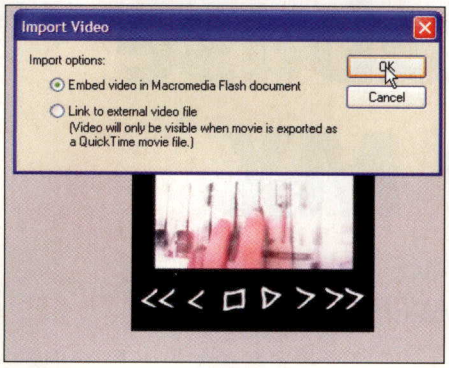
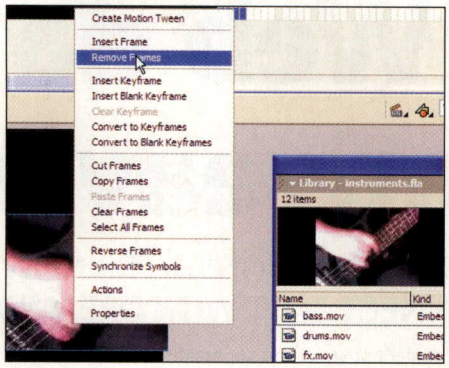

Import Video
Import options:
Embed video in Macromedia Flash document
Link to external video file
(Video will only be visible when movie is exported as a QuickTime movie file.)
OK
Cancel

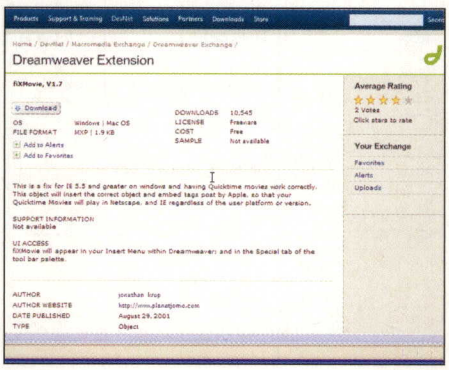
12 Embedding video

The difference between embedding video and linking to video in Flash is that you'll have a larger, lower quality video if you embed files into Flash. But if you create small animations or video banners in Flash, you'll probably want to embed the file in the document.



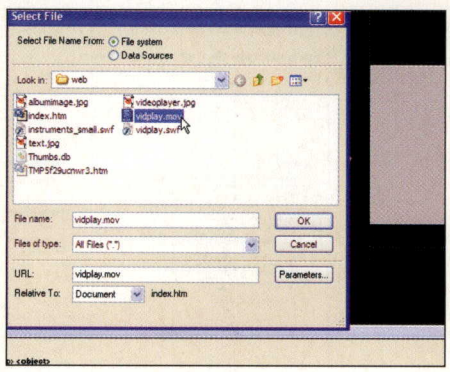
13 Shrink the video

To embed video into your Flash document, follow steps seven and eight but instead of 'Link', pick 'Embed'. Your video will be inserted into the document. To make it smaller, mark a range of unwanted frames with your cursor and select 'Remove Frames'.



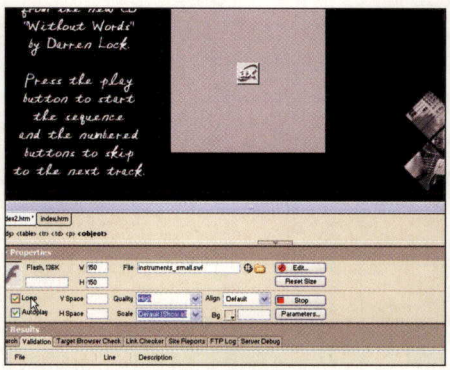
16 Dreamweaver extension

There are some compatibility issues with embedding QuickTime movies into HTML and playing them in Netscape and IE. In Dreamweaver MX, click 'Insert', 'Get More Objects' and download fiXMovie, V1.7 extension.



17 Insert the movie

With the fiXMovie, V1.7 extension installed (look at the foot of the Insert menu), you can insert your custom QuickTime player. Point your browser to the QuickTime movie and it will be placed on your page, shown in Dreamweaver as an ActiveX object.


"Without Words"
by Darren Lock
Press the play button to start the sequence and the numbered buttons to skip to the next track
Properties

20 Other adjustments

Use the Properties window to alter the way your Flash movie behaves. You can adjust the movie quality, the alignment, the size and how the movie plays from here. You can also make the file autoplay or loop by checking the respective boxes.

Video Player
Here are some video clips taken from the new CD "Without Words" by Darren Lock
Press the play button to start the sequence and the numbered buttons to skip to the next track
1
2
3

21 The finished site

You should now have a Web site resplendent with multimedia content. Don't forget many Net users don't have a broadband connection, so you should either offer them an alternative link to a less intense site or keep your movie files to a reasonable size.

Jargon buster

ActiveX

This refers to a set of file-linking technologies developed by Microsoft for embedding and linking files together. In Dreamweaver, QuickTime movies are embedded into documents using an ActiveX controller.

Frame rate

This is the rate of frames that a movie runs at. When you watch a film at the cinema or on TV, the picture runs at 25 frames a second (or 25 pictures per second). Of course, this generates a large video file, so if you are creating video for the Web, turn the frame rate down accordingly.

ActionScript

The programming language used in Flash, which is very similar to JavaScript in its structure. The ActionScript elements can be accessed from the Actions menu in the Flash editor and added to your movies in a modular fashion.

Power users' tip

IN ORDER TO embed three different movies (as in our example) you have to use three different scenes in the Flash document. This means that with a little bit of extra code you can jump from one video track to another with relative ease. We used the following code on our numerical buttons:

```
"on (press) {
 gotoAndPlay("Scene 3", 1);
}
```

As you can see, we have designated which scene and which frame should be played (scene 3, frame 1). Of course, you could just lay all the videos back to back and set Stop and Start frames and buttons, but using scenes gives the programmer a little more organisational clarity.

In brief:
Task: Create a Web database
Software I need: Dreamweaver MX, PHP, MySQL
Difficulty: Advanced
Time I need: Set aside at least an hour

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Create a Web database for Dreamweaver MX

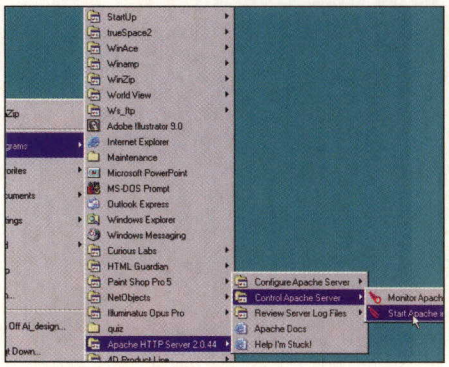
PART TWO

AFTER SETTING UP YOUR SERVER LAST MONTH, IT'S NOW TIME TO CREATE A DATABASE AND CONNECT TO IT WITH DREAMWEAVER MX

LAST MONTH WE focused on the necessary but time-consuming steps to getting a dynamic server up and running on your local PC. This time we'll create the database and show you how to set Dreamweaver up so it can connect, get access to the database and be integrated into your projects.

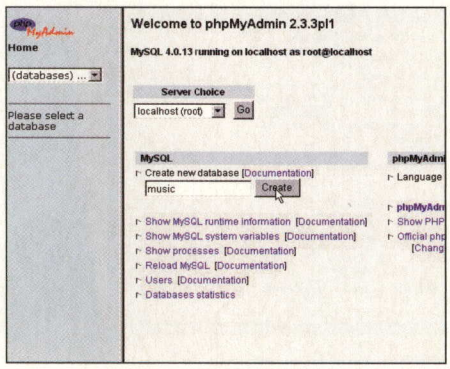
You may be wondering why you'll need a database, and the simple answer is flexibility. The content of your Web site resides independently of your actual pages, meaning it can be presented in whatever way you wish by selecting how you would like to use the information. This gives greater flexibility over your designs, and it becomes invaluable when working with lots of information that could otherwise become difficult to keep track of, bloating your site.

The database we're going to create is a music catalogue that can be used to keep track of your CDs; it'll be a good way of getting used to working with a database. You don't have to be technically minded to take this on board, as Dreamweaver has all the difficult coding taken care of with its server technology and coding – so there's need to learn any new Web programming languages!



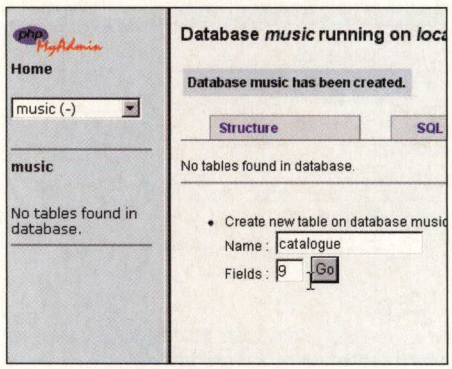
1 Starting up your server

After all the installations last month it's time to start the server up, so go to the 'Apache' group in the Programs list and select 'Start Apache in Console'. A DOS window will open up, which you can minimise. Open your favourite Web browser.



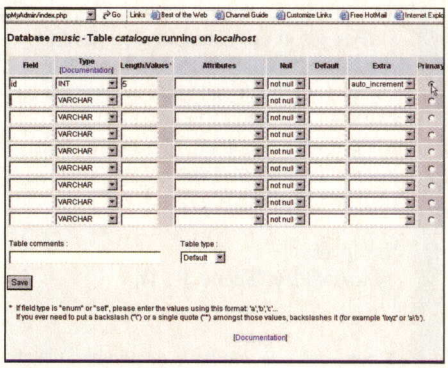
2 Connect to phpMyAdmin

Now type **http://localhost/phpMyAdmin/index.php** to launch phpMyAdmin. We are going to create a brand new database to work with, so type the word 'music' in the input box and press the 'Create' button next to it.



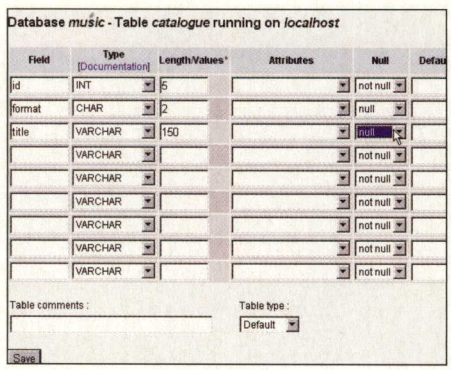
3 Creating a table

This new database is empty without any tables, so type the name 'catalogue', give it '9' fields and press the 'Go' button. You should be taken to a new page where you can input various types of field and the relevant settings for each.



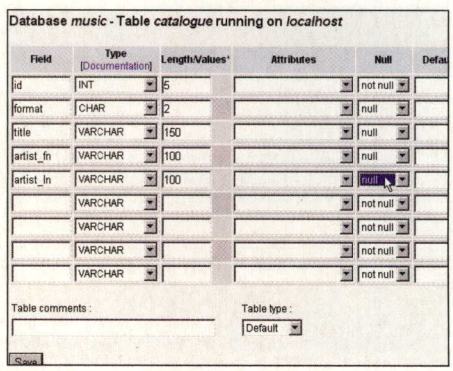
4 Adding fields

In the first input box under 'Field' add the name 'id'. Change the type of field to 'int' for integer, which holds a number. Give it a length of '5' and in the 'Extra' column make this an 'auto_increment' field from the menu. Now click the 'Primary' option.



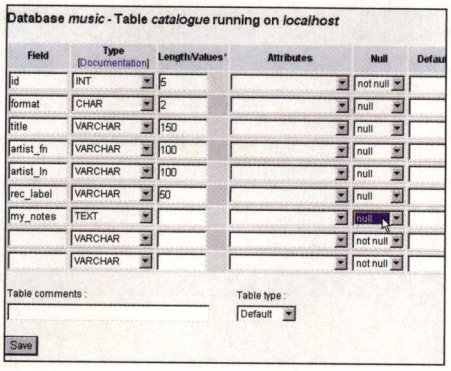
5 Another field

In the next row add the name 'format' as the field, set the type to 'char' with a length of '2', and set the 'Null' column to 'null'. In the next row add the name 'title' as the field name, set the type to 'varchar' with a length '150', and as before set 'Null' to 'null'.



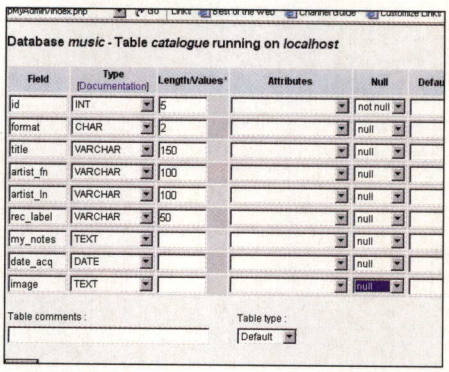
6 Add fields for the artist

In the next row add the name 'artist_fn' as the field name, set the type to 'varchar' with a length of '100' and set the 'Null' column to 'null'. In the next, add 'artist_ln' which will hold the artist's last name, and copy the details in the row above so it's the same.



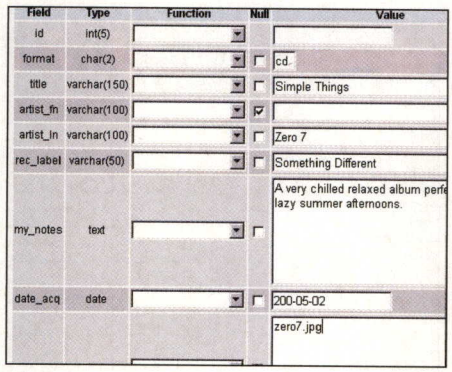
7 Label and notes

In the next row add 'rec_label' for the field; set the type to 'varchar' with a length of '50' and a default of 'null'. In the next, name the field 'my_notes', set the type to 'text' with no maximum length settings for the characters. Alter the 'Null' column as before.



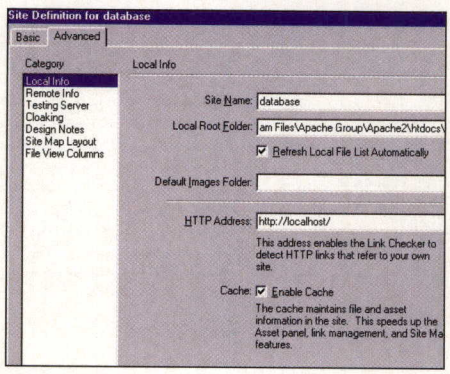
8 Last fields

In the next row add 'date_acq' for the field name, setting the type to 'date' with 'null' set as before. Name the last field 'image', set the type to 'text' from the drop menu, and the 'Null' column as before. Hit 'Save' to add these field types to the table.



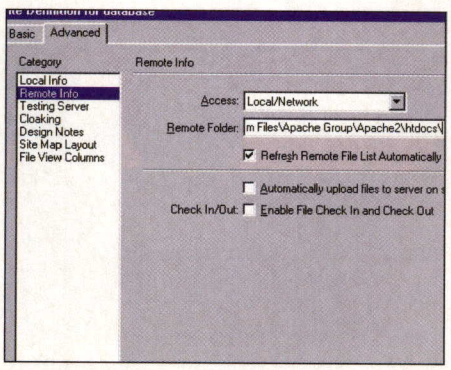
9 Insert values

Click on the 'Insert' tab under the table details, and you can now insert values into the table so you have something to work from. Copy the values from the screenshot above and click the 'Go' button so this is inserted into the database.


Site Definition for database
Basic
Advanced
Category
Local Info
Remote Info
Testing Server
Cloaking
Design Notes
Site Map Layout
File View Columns
Local Info
Site Name: database
Local Root Folder: am Files\Apache Group\Apache2\htdocs\
Refresh Local File List Automatically
Default Images Folder:
HTTP Address: http://localhost/
This address enables the Link Checker to detect HTTP links that refer to your own site.
Cache: Enable Cache
The cache maintains file and asset information in the site. This speeds up the Asset panel, link management, and Site Ma features.

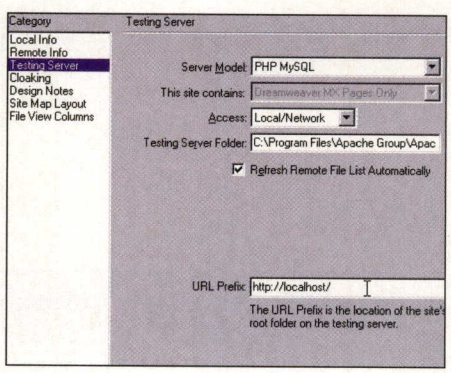
10 Start Dreamweaver MX

Now it's time to start Dreamweaver. Go to the 'Site' menu and choose 'New Site'. In the pop-up window fill in the details as shown, calling your site 'database', and set the local root folder as 'htdocs' folder under the Apache program group.



11 Remote info

Make sure the HTTP Address is set to 'http://localhost/' and hit 'Remote Info'. Change the Access to 'Local/Network' in the drop menu and choose 'C:\Program File\Apache Group\Apache2\htdocs\' as the remote folder, provided this is where you set it up.



12 Set the testing server

Click 'Testing Server' and pick 'PHP/MySQL' as the server model. Ensure that 'Access' is set to 'Local/Network' and choose the 'htdocs' folder in the Apache Group folder as the testing server folder. Add 'http://localhost' as the URL prefix and hit 'OK'.

Jargon buster

Tables

Tables in databases are where all the information is stored. The tables are divided into rows and column. Each column takes a different piece of information and a new row is created when a new entry is added into the database. The database columns can be made up of different data types.

Data types

All databases require you to specify which piece of information you wish to store in a certain column. As you will have seen from the drop menu in phpMyAdmin, there are many different types. We have used 'char', 'varchar', 'text', 'int' and 'date' to store our information. For a more detailed description of all the data types, see the MySQL Web site at **www.mysql.com**.

Testing server

Dreamweaver requires you to set a place where you intend to run your files from, as you need to connect to these files using HTTP to have the dynamic content processed on the server side and then passed to the browser for viewing. We are storing our files in the same location as the testing server, so no uploads will be necessary.

Database connection

Because you may be working with the same database on many different pages, Dreamweaver requires you to set up the connection to the database with passwords and usernames which you'll have from last month's tutorial. This connection will then be used site-wide to gain access to your database.

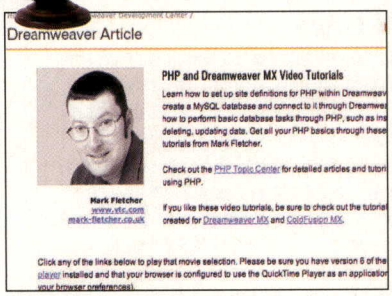
Recordset (query)

A query with the database asks for information from the database in a specific format. In the tutorial we have asked for all data to be used and ordered by the date_acq field and then ordered in Descending order. Ordering on text fields will be done alphabetically in either ascending or descending order.

Server behaviours

These are special coded behaviours in the PHP language selected when we chose the server model in Dreamweaver. These behaviours perform specific functions to bring dynamic content to the page without the need for hand coding them ourselves.

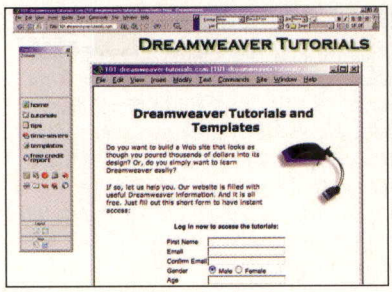
Web resources



Macromedia

www.macromedia.com/devnet/mx/dreamweaver/articles/php_videos.html

These online movies show you how to set up a complete PHP/MySQL database with Dreamweaver MX. Each one is split into small clips to save bandwidth and allow you to master the sections. You'll need the Quicktime player to access these movies.



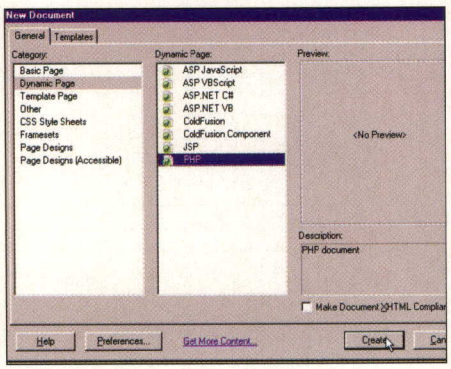
101 Dreamweaver Tutorials

www.101-dreamweaver-tutorials.com/

You need to sign up to this site before getting into the tutorials, but despite not having the quality of Macromedia (above), it's still worth a browse for a different slant on Dreamweaver and databases. There's a wide range of tutorials, tips and templates to download as well, to help save time.

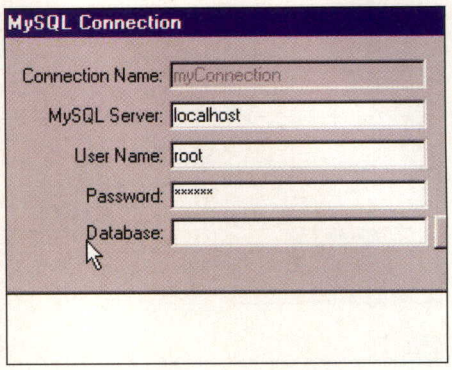
Power users' tip

BECAUSE WE ARE using phpMyAdmin to create our database, table and initial content, it saves a lot of time learning how to use SQL commands to get the same result. Whenever you add any content to MySQL using phpMyAdmin, the SQL commands are shown so you can learn them if you wish. You'll find that it's not too difficult, as it almost reads like English, with the relevant values inserted into the appropriate fields in the table.



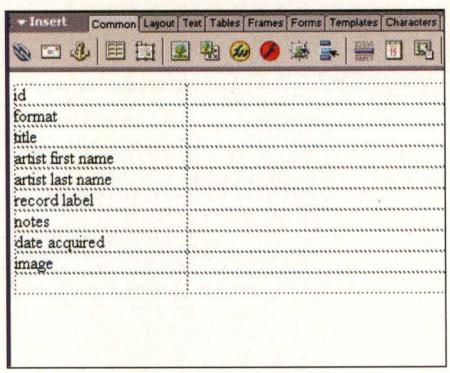
13 A new page

Hit 'Done' to save the site info, go to 'File' and choose 'New'. In the pop-up window pick 'Dynamic Page', select 'PHP' and click 'Create'. From the 'File' menu save this page as 'admin.php' and save it into the 'htdocs' folder of the Apache program folder.



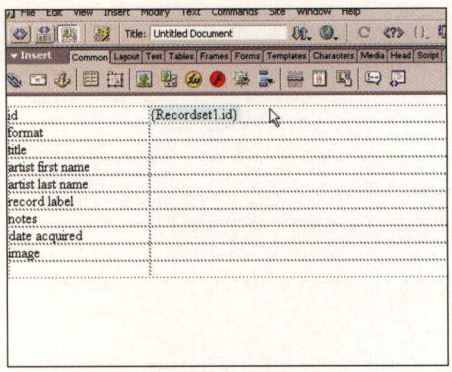
14 Application window

If the Application panel is not open, go to the 'Window' menu and choose 'Databases'. Click the 'Databases' tab and the 'plus' icon, and select 'MySQL Connection'. Name it 'myConnection' and fill in the details as shown above, adding your password.



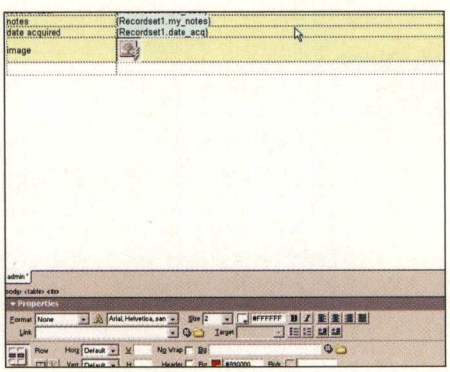
17 Insert HTML table

From the Insert panel click on 'Table' and create a table 10 rows by 2 columns with '0' for cell padding, cell spacing and border. Make the width '100%'. Click inside the first cell and change its width to '20%', then type the names as shown.



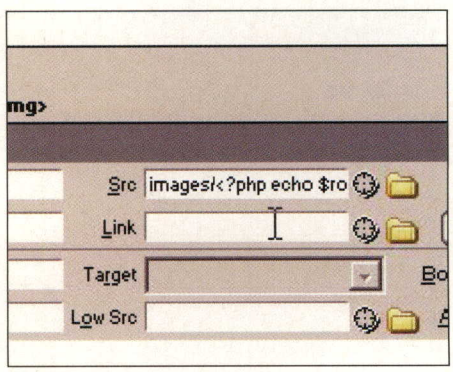
18 Split cell

Put the cursor inside the cell next to the 'id' cell. In the Properties palette, click on 'Split Cell', split it into three columns and click 'OK'. In the first column click on the 'plus' symbol next to the Recordset and drag 'id' into the column as shown.



21 Format the table

Highlight the cells 'format' down to 'image'; in the Properties palette change the background colour to '#FFFFCC'. Make the font 'Arial', size '2'. Highlight the top row; change background colour to '#990000'. Change the font as before but make the colour white.

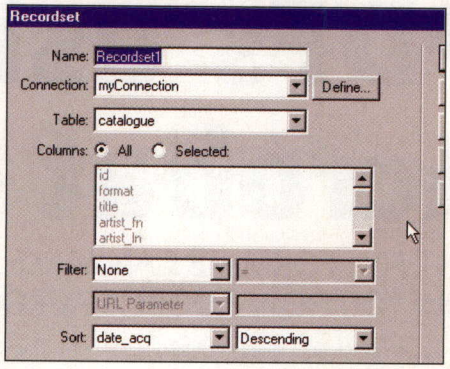


22 Set image location

Click the grey image. In the 'SRC' option in the Properties palette, place your cursor before the link. Add 'images/' so the file points to the Images folder. Minimise Dreamweaver. Copy the Images folder from the cover CD to the 'htdocs' folder on your local drive.

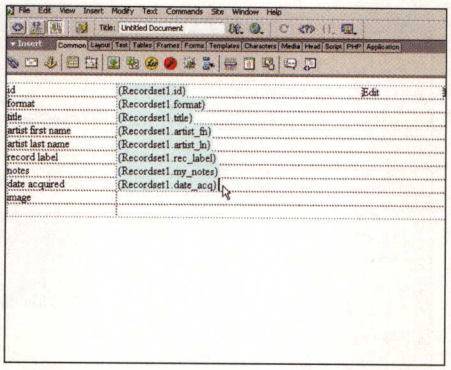
15 Select database

Under the Database option choose 'Select', and a new window pops up. Here you should see your music database; select it and press 'OK'. Now click 'Test' at the side of the window and a message should tell you the connection was successful.



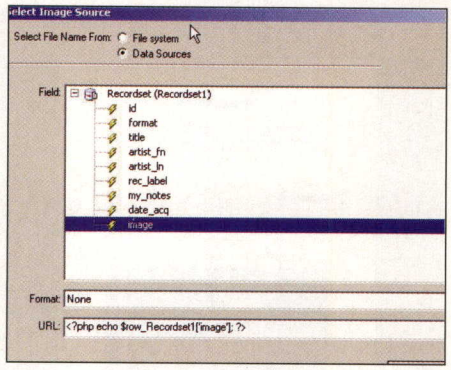
16 Make connection

Click 'OK', 'Bindings' (in the Application Panel), the 'plus' icon and 'Recordset (query)'. Under 'Connection' pick 'myConnection' and the table details appear. Change the sort details to 'date_acq' and 'Descending' order. Again, hit 'Test' to make sure.



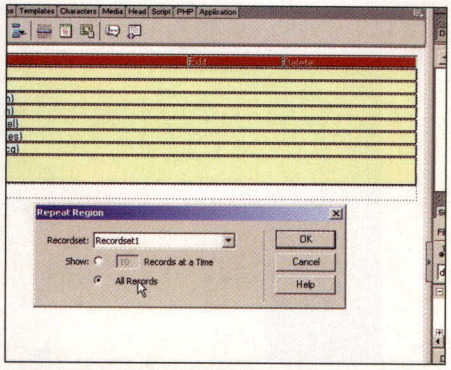
19 Add dynamic content

In the next two cells add 'edit' and 'delete'. For each cell to the right of the words typed in step 17, drag across the appropriate field from the Recordset in the Bindings panel, but when you come to 'image', leave it as we have a different procedure.



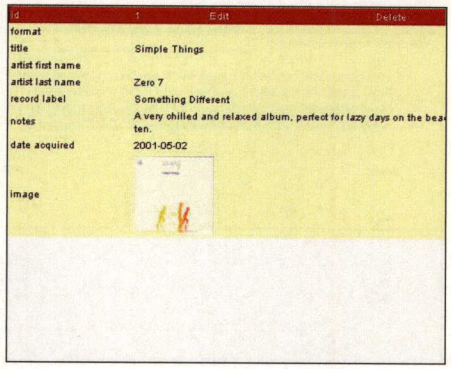
20 Dynamic images

Place the cursor in the cell to the right of 'images' and click on 'Insert Image'. Change the option to 'Select File from Data Sources': the window will change. Select 'image' from the list that you see, click 'OK' and a grey box will appear.



23 Repeat region

Highlight all cells in the table except the white ones at the bottom; click the 'Server Behaviours' tab in the Application panel. Click the 'plus' icon and 'Repeat Region'. In the pop-up window make the 'Show' option 'All Records' so you can see the whole database.



24 View the finished file

Click 'OK'. A grey tab appears above the Repeat section. Save the file, open your browser and type 'http://localhost/admin.php'. Your page should now be populated with data. Next time we'll look at how to edit, delete and add entries, and organise info on pages.

Jargon buster

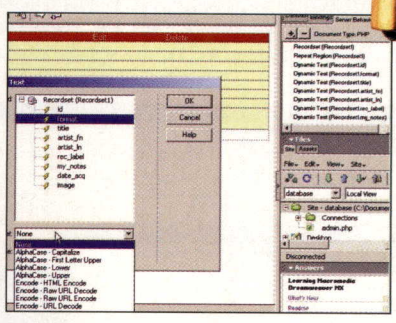
Dynamic text

Dynamic text is text which is not typed directly into the page in Dreamweaver MX, but instead comes from an external source. The external source is usually a database but can also be text files. The advantage of using this system is that content can be easily edited without the need for changing the pages in Dreamweaver, and it's very easy to change how you would like the information ordered. You'll find this particularly useful if you need to make online catalogues.

Repeat region

This sets up an area that is to be repeated for each entry that appears in the database. So next month when more content is added, this region will automatically grow when viewed online, and that saves time for the page designer, as the content will just automatically fill it.

Power users' tip



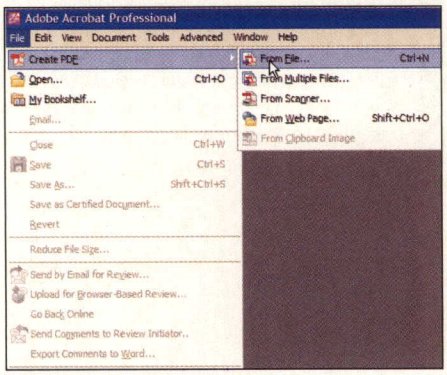
AS WELL AS dragging across the names of the text fields from the Bindings folder, you can add dynamic text from the Server Behaviours tab in the Application panel. Click the 'plus' symbol and from the drop-down list choose 'Dynamic Text'. You can choose your field from the pop-up window which appears, and there is an additional Format option here which will allow special formatting for the text. Click 'OK' to apply and the dynamic text will appear at the position of the cursor on the screen.

In brief:
Task: Create PDFs with Acrobat 6
Software I need: Adobe Acrobat 6.0
Difficulty: Very simple
Time I need: About 20 minutes

Create PDFs using Adobe Acrobat 6

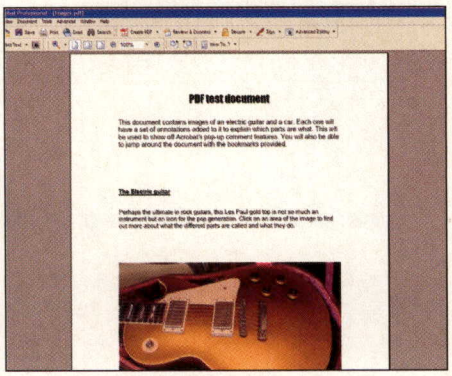
THE VAST ARRAY OF DOCUMENT FILE FORMATS CAN MAKE DISTRIBUTING PRINTABLE MEDIA A NIGHTMARE. WE SHOW YOU HOW ADOBE'S ACROBAT CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEM

WHEN YOU THINK about it, using a whole myriad of often incompatible software to do essentially the same job is, well, a bit silly. Text files, desktop publishing templates, graphics, spreadsheets and Web pages are all 2D documents, but their differing file formats and markups keep them separated. This is why we often require package after package from various vendors, to not only create these documents but also read them. This can cause untold irritation when you share your efforts with people who don't have the required software – or worse, when you download an important foreign manuscript. Improved file type support has gone some way to unifying things, but the other option has long been programs such as Adobe's Acrobat. Its promotion of the PDF standard has made it an industry giant, with the ability to view files with free viewers or plug-ins vital. However, to convert files of other types and perform certain edits, you'll need the full publishing software. We show you how to get to grips with the main features of version 6 by creating a dynamic PDF from file and directly exporting documents from other applications.



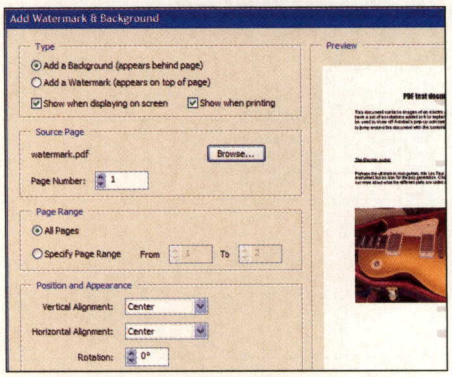
1 Create a PDF

Acrobat 6 is not a document editor, but a tool for tweaking converted files. These are primarily drafted in their original apps, so to author a new PDF you must open a native file. Click 'File', 'From File' on the Create PDF menu and locate a suitable Word doc.



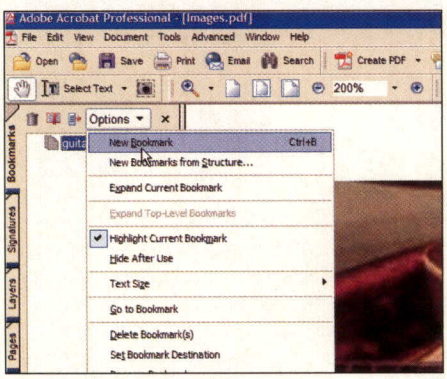
2 Get converted

Once you've picked a file to create the PDF from, Acrobat will begin the conversion process. It first opens the file in Word, then gradually transforms all the original elements. The converted file will be displayed in the main Acrobat preview area.



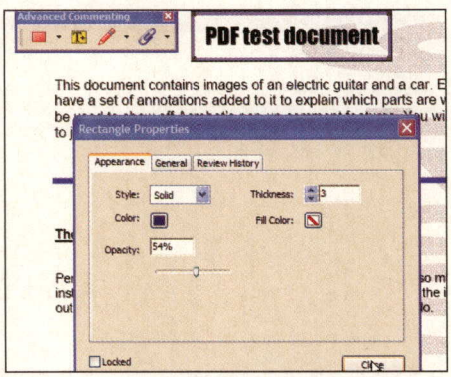
3 Adding watermarks

You can make your document look more professional by adding a watermark or background. Select 'Document', 'Add Watermark & Background' from the main menu then follow the options. You can only use another PDF as the source.



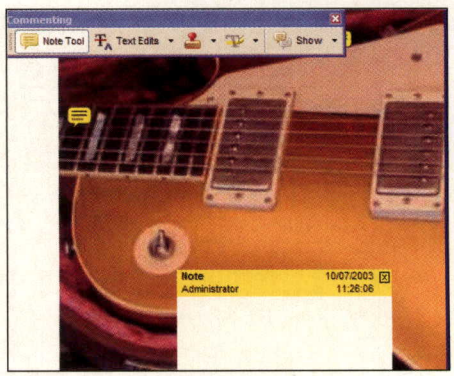
4 Bookmarking

You can put together a list of bookmarks to let you jump to certain sections throughout your document. All you need to do is position a page in the viewer at a desired magnification level, open the 'Bookmarks' tab and click 'Add Bookmark'.



5 Mark up the markups

Right-click the top toolbar and hit 'Advanced Commenting', to see a new floating toolbar. This lets you draw and attach sound effects, but the first button will add simple shapes or 'markups'. These can be used to manually draw boxes and lines.



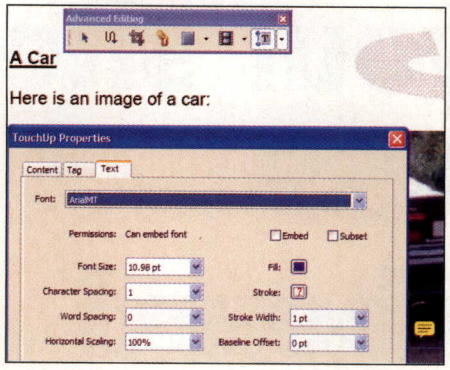
6 A message to you

Add pop-up comments to annotate an image or diagram by clicking 'Review & Comment' on the main toolbar. Hit 'Commenting Toolbar' and you'll be given a floating bar containing a Note tool. Use this to draw a Comment box where you wish it to appear.

The neck features wide frets and a chunky thru-neck. Being glued and 'scarfed' onto the body improves resonance.
The patented 'tune-o-matic' bridge

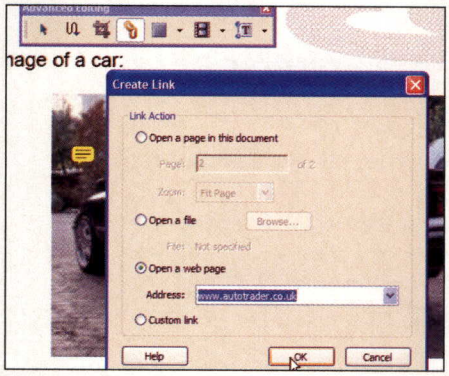
7 Pop-up notes

Type your text in the tabbed boxes, clicking 'Close' to finish. A speech bubble will be inserted to indicate the hotspot and the comment will appear when the cursor moves over this icon. Double-click a bubble to perform any edits to the Comment boxes.



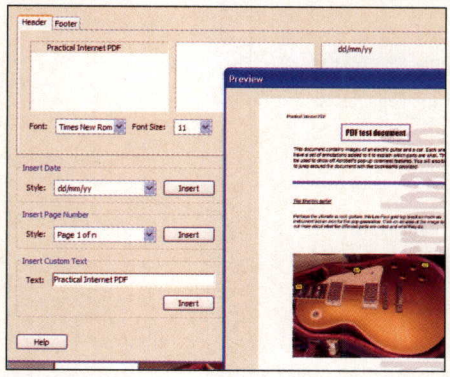
8 Editing text

Before adding links you may want to first set text styles. Click 'Advanced Editing' on the main toolbar to view the Editing toolbox. Select the 'TouchUp Text' tool and highlight the chosen text. Right-click and hit 'Properties' to edit.



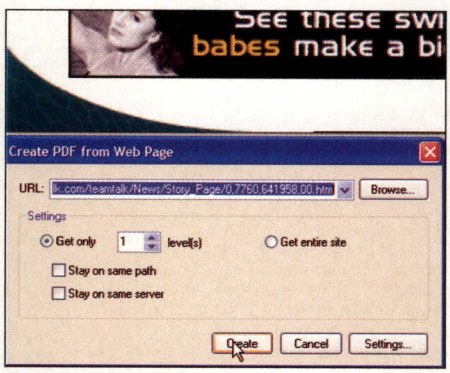
9 Adding links

Again use 'Advanced Editing' to select the 'Link' creator tool. Draw a rectangle around the text and select 'Open a Web Page', typing the desired URL into the address box. Click 'OK' to confirm and use the link's properties to set appearance.



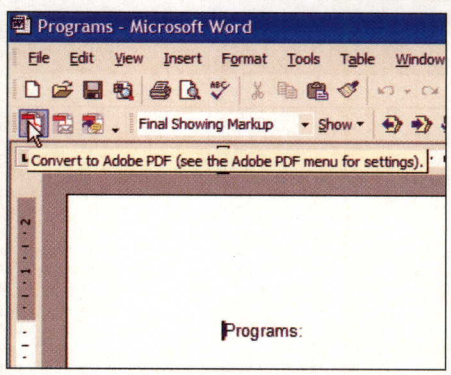
10 Headers and footers

Select 'Document', 'Add Headers & Footers' from the main menu to get a dialog for setting page numbers etc. Use the tabbed boxes to specify if you want time, date and page indicators added to the page tops/bottoms. Hit 'Preview' to check selections.



11 Webbed PDF

Acrobat lets you convert a Web page or site into a PDF document. Hit 'File', 'Create PDF', 'From Web Page' to open the options. Use the URL box to enter an address and set the levels of pages required. Once downloaded, the new document will appear.



12 Word export

When Acrobat is installed it inserts new buttons and options into applications that support it. For example, Microsoft Word receives facilities to convert documents into PDFs directly, along with quick links for emailing.

Jargon buster

PDF

PDF is an abbreviation for 'Portable File Format', developed by Adobe. This is the Acrobat standard, and is used to capture documents of virtually any authoring origin while preserving the original formatting. With users able to view this universal format by downloading a free viewer, the distribution of software-independent documents has been made possible across the Web.

Font embedding

This wasn't mentioned during the tutorial, but is something worth explaining. With PDF files intended for universal distribution, problems can arise if a document contains non-standard or exotic fonts. Acrobat combats this by giving you the option to embed the characters into the page or package full font sets with the document. If you choose to embed, no further text editing can be performed, while packaging fonts can swell the file's size dramatically.

PostScript

Developed by Adobe during the Eighties, PostScript is a programming language for the universal or portable printing of graphics and text. Originally known as a 'page description language' it will let any compatible printer interpret files. A method of creating PDFs within those authoring tools that don't support it is to send files to a PostScript printer. This virtual device will convert the data into a PostScript file which can then be transformed into PDF.

Power users' tip

ONE WAY OF 'stamping' your identity on a PDF within Acrobat is to literally add a stamp. This could possibly be a company or personal logo, or even a handwritten signature. There are also a number of example stamps included with the package. If you want to tailor your own however, you must first draw it within a suitable painting or drawing application and save it in a supported format. Anything from GIFS, JPEGS and bitmaps will do fine, and you can then add the file very easily. Click 'Tools', 'Commenting', 'Stamp Tool' and 'Create Custom Stamp' from the main menu. A small dialog will prompt you for the file and ask for a name and category. Submit the details, and the image will be added to the Stamp menu for quick attachment to the document.

In brief:
Task: Create the fundamentals of a message board with ASP
Software I need: Server with ASP functionality, and a standard text editor
Difficulty: Advanced
Time I need: About an hour

PART TWO

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Furnish your site with an ASP message board

GET YOUR USERS TALKING WITH OUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO BUILDING A MESSAGE BOARD USING THE MIGHTY POWER OF ACTIVE SERVER PAGES

Communication is key to turning the Net from an overblown library into an online community. In order to tap the true power of the Information Superhighway, you're going to build an avenue for communication which will let users exchange ideas, discuss issues and find out more about your services and skills. It's also a damn good way to show off your coding prowess.

Our script to date

This is the second part of our series of step-by-step tutorials that will show you how to create an online message board using ASP. The first part showed how to lay all the groundwork for our message board and how to create the default forums page. Don't worry if you missed this – you can always get a back issue (see page 135). Next month we'll show how to code a page allowing the user to post a message, as well as

```
<%
Set Con = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
    Con.Open "messageboardDB"
    Set rsF = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.RecordSet")
    rsF.ActiveConnection = Con
rsF.Open "SELECT forum_name, forum_introduction FROM
    forums WHERE forum_id = " & Request("id")
    If rsF.EOF Then
Response.Write "The requested forum does not exist. <a
    href='default.asp'>Please click here.</a>"
      Response.End
    End If
    Set rsT = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.RecordSet")
    rsT.ActiveConnection = Con
rsT.Open "SELECT * FROM messages WHERE message_type =
    'THREAD' and message_forum = " & Request("id") & "
    ORDER BY message_date, message_time DESC"
    Set rsM = Server.CreateObject("ADODB.RecordSet")
    rsM.ActiveConnection = Con
%>
```

1 Displaying the forum

Create a new text file named 'view_forums.asp', and insert the above code. The code sets up our database, opening a connection, and creates a number of recordsets. The first recordset finds the relative forum, and the second accesses all the messages in that forum.

```
<html><head><title><%=rsF("forum_name")%></title></head
    >
<link rel='stylesheet' type='text/css'
    href='global.css'>
<body>
<table class='tb' cellspacing='3'>
<tr>
<td colspan='4'><h1><%=rsF("forum_name")%></h1></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan='4'><%=rsF("forum_introduction")%></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td id='center'><b>From</b></td>
<td id='center'><b>Subject</b></td>
<td id='center'><b>Replies</b></td>
</tr>
```

2 Introduction and information

The next part of our code sets up the Web page and the table in which the various messages will be shown. It's all pretty standard HTML, but it also outputs the forum name and introduction, using the forum recordset shown in step one.

```
<%
    Set Con =
    Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
    Con.Open "a9352822dsn"
    Set rsM =
    Server.CreateObject("ADODB.RecordSet")
    rsM.ActiveConnection = Con
    rsM.Open "SELECT * FROM forum_messages WHERE
    message_id = " & Request("id")
%>
<html><head><title><%=rsM("message_subject")%></titl
    e></head>
<link rel='stylesheet' type='text/css'
    href='css/global.css'>
<body><table class='tb' id='message' cellspacing=3>
```

5 Displaying the thread

Now create a new text file named 'view_message.asp' and enter the above code. This code sets out our connection and recordset (just one this time). Then we access the thread message. We need to display this before we display all the messages leading off it.

```
<tr><td>
<button id='button' onClick='location =
    "view_forum.asp?id=<%=rsM("message_forum")%>";'>B
    ack</button>
</td><td id='right'>
<button id='button' onClick='location =
    "post.asp?type=message&id=<%=rsM("message_id")%>"
    ;'>Post Message</button>
</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>From</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class='border' colspan=2>
<%=UCase(rsM("message_from"))%></tr>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>Subject</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class='border' colspan=2>
<%=rsM("message_subject")%></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>Message</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class='border' colspan=2>
<%=rsM("message_body")%></td></tr></table>
```

6 Displaying the messages

We need to display all the information in each message. In this case we're just displaying who the message is from, the subject and the message itself, but we could also display the exact time and date it was displayed.

demonstrate how to parse this message, check its integrity and upload it to your message board. Last but not least, we'll show you how to build a rudimentary admin script which will allow you to delete posts, edit posts and create new forums.

Structure of the table

We have two tables in our database. One holds info relating to the forums on the message board; this includes the description and introductory text. The second holds the messages. These are separated into two types. The first is a 'thread' – the top message in a chain of messages. The second is 'reply' messages: these are replies to threads. Each message contains a reference to its parent, either the forum (if it's a thread) or the thread (if it's a reply message).

This month's script consists of two pages. The first of these displays the forum and all the threads leading off the forum, with a link to each one. The second page displays the thread and all the messages leading off the thread.

Take a look around

This is a reasonably simple way of organising our message board, but it's effective and tidy. It allows us to organise messages into a format which is intuitive and easy to read. However, it might not be to your taste – if you experiment you may be able to find a method you prefer. You'll find most of the code and structure you need below in order to put together your own version.

It's advisable to take a look at other message boards. For instance, have a butchers at the example at **www.epochx.com**, which shows how the message board shown below has been adapted for an online community, or try **www.ezboards.com** for an alternative approach.

Jargon buster

ASP

Active Server Pages is a server-side scripting language created by Microsoft. When a request is made for an ASP page, the server generates an HTML page based on the scripts in the ASP page. ASP is easy to learn and simplifies incorporating database functionality into a site.

Connection

Creating a connection to a database is the first step to using a database in ASP. You need a number of things to do this, but can simplify matters by creating a DNS. The connection object can be used to connect to a number of databases using the ODBC. For more info on the ODBC and ASP go to **www.devguru.com**.

```
<%
If rsT.EOF Then
Response.Write("<tr><td colspan=' 4'  class=' nomsg' >There
     are currently no messages in this
     forum.</td></tr>")
Else
     Do While NOT rsT.EOF %>
       <tr class=' tx' >
       <td id=' center'  class=' border' >
       <a
     href=' view_message.asp?id=<%=rsT("message_id")%>' >
<%=UCase(rsT("message_from"))%></a>
       </td><td id=' center'  class=' border' >
       <a
     href=' view_message.asp?id=<%=rsT("message_id")%>' >
<%=filterMessage(rsT("message_subject"), 1)%></a></td>
<%
rsT.MoveNext
     Loop
End If %>
```

3 Displaying the threads

This code checks to make sure there are messages in the forum (outputting a holding message if there aren't) and then lists them, using a 'Do While' loop. The sender of each message and its subject are outputted, along with a link to the message proper.

```
<tr><td colspan=2>
<button id=' button'  onClick=' location="default.asp";' >
Forums</button></td>
<td colspan=2 id=' right' >
<button id=' button'  onClick=' location=
     "post.asp?type=thread&id=<%=Request("id")%>";' >Pos
     t Message</button>
</td></tr></table>
</body>
</html> <%
     rsT.Close
     rsF.Close
     Con.Close
     Set rsT = Nothing
     Set rsF = Nothing
     Set Con = Nothing
%>
```

4 Cleaning house

Last but not least, we give the user an opportunity to post their own messages or return to the default page. Once this is done, we need to close our recordsets and connection before cleaning up and setting each one to equal 'Nothing'.

```
<%
thread_id = rsM("message_id")
rsM.Close
rsM.Open "SELECT * FROM messages WHERE message_thread =
     " & thread_id
Do While NOT rsM.EOF
%>
<p><table class=' tb'  id=' message'  cellspacing=3>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>From</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class=' border'  colspan=2>
<%=UCase(rsM("message_from"))%></tr>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>Subject</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class=' border'  colspan=2>
<%=rsM("message_subject")%></tr>
<tr><td colspan=2><b>Message</b></td></tr>
<tr><td class=' border'  colspan=2>
<%=rsM("message_body")%></td></tr></table><%
```

7 Looping through

Now we access all the messages that were written in reply to our original thread, and display each of these in order (sorted by the date and time of the post). We loop this again and again until each message is displayed.

```
rsM.MoveNext
Loop
rsM.Close
Con.Close
Set rsM = Nothing
Set Con = Nothing
%>
</body>
</html>
```

8 Keeping it nice and neat

Now we close the loop, close the recordset and connection, and set them to 'Nothing'. This is important to remember, as it saves server-side resources, and stops our database from becoming clogged up by unused connections.

In brief:
Task: Create a mailing list
Software I need: Notepad or Simpletext, PHP and MySQL
Difficulty: Advanced
Time I need: About an hour

Create a site mailing list with PHP and MySQL

STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS AND KEEP THEM UPDATED ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS BY CREATING YOUR OWN MAILING LIST USING PHP AND MYSQL

GETTING YOUR CUSTOMERS to buy one of your products should just be the beginning of your relationship with them. If it isn't, you're doing something wrong. Communication is the key. Keep them hooked, and keep them coming back for more. Building a mailing list is one of many ways to keep your customers updated on the latest developments or product releases, and this month we show you how to build your own.

In order to create a mailing list we need to allow users to register their email address. This will add them to the system, and enable the administrator or administrators of the site to send messages to everyone on that list. It should also allow the user to remove their email from the list – after all, there's nothing more irritating than unwanted emails.

```
create database mailinglist;

use mailinglist;

create table list (
    id int unsigned not null auto_increment primary
    key,
    email char(100) not null,
    remove char(20) );
```

1 Create the database

Before we can start coding our script, we need to create our database. This will contain the users' email addresses and removal keys. Type the above into the command line of MySQL, remembering to insert the semi-colons to indicate the end of a line.

```
<html><head><title>Subscribe</title></head> <body>
    <?
if (!$_POST["email"]) {
echo "<form action='joinlist.php' method='post'>";
echo "<p>Enter your email address below and click
    'Submit' to join our mailing list.</p>";
    echo "<p><input type='text' name='email'
    size='40'></p>";
    echo "<p><input type='submit' value='sub-
    mit'></p>";
    echo "</form>"; }
```

2 First part of the script

Now we can create the first part of our script. Create a text file named 'joinlist.php' and type in the above code. If the form hasn't been submitted, the script will display the form in which the user can enter their email in order to join the mailing list.

```
else {
    if ($_POST["email"]) {
      @ $connect = mysql_pconnect();
      mysql_select_db("mailinglist");
$result = mysql_query("SELECT email, remove FROM
    list WHERE email = '".$_POST["email"]."'");
if (!mysql_num_rows($result)) {       echo "<p>This
    email has not been registered on our
    system.</p>"; }
      else {
            $data = mysql_fetch_array($result);
            $to_address = $data["email"];
            $subject = "Removal From Mailing
    List";
$content = "A request has been made to remove your
    address from our mailing list./n/nGo to
    http://www.yoururl.com/removelist.php and enter
    your removal code./n/n Your removal code is:
    ".$data["remove"]."./n/n";
```

5 Checking the email address

Once the user has entered their email address and clicked 'Submit', our script needs to check that the email address actually exists on our database, and output an error message if it doesn't. If it does exist, the script starts to put together the relevant variables for the email.

```
    @ $err = mail($toaddress, $subject, $content,
        "From: noreply@yoururl.com\nReply-To: nore-
        ply@yoururl.com");
if (!$err) { echo "Your removal key could not be
    sent."; }
else { echo "<p>Your removal key has been
    sent.</p>"; } } } }       ?>
<form action='removelist.php' method='post'>
<p>To unsubscribe enter your email address in the
    field below and click 'Send Key'.</p>
<p>Email: <input type='text' name='email'
    size='40'></p>
<p><input type='submit' value='Send
    Key'></p></form>
<form action='removelist.php' method='post'>
<p>Please enter the removal key below and click
    'Unsubscribe'.</p>
<p>Removal Key: <input type='text' name='remove'
    size='10'></p>
<p><input type='submit' value='Unsubscribe'></p>
</form>       <? } ?> </body> </html>
```

6 Confirmation

The first part of this code sends the confirmation email (with the removal key) to the user's email address using the **mail()** function. The second part displays the form asking the user to enter their email address and/or removal key in order to unsubscribe.

We'll be using PHP and MySQL in order to create this script. These two products are cheap, cost-effective and extremely efficient, as well as being reasonably easy to get to grips with. You can find out more about PHP and download its latest releases at **www.php.net**, and MySQL at **www.mysql.com**. Together these two products allow you to create extremely adaptable server-side scripts.

Three sections

Our script will be separated into three sections. The first allows the user to add his or her email to your mailing list, so they can receive any mailings you may send. The second page enables them to remove themselves from the mailing list, although this requires them to enter a unique removal code, which will be emailed to them upon request.

The third and last page is the one which will allow the administrator (or anyone else who has direct access to the mailing list) to enter a textual email that they want to send to all those who have subscribed to the list. It is important to note that this area should be password-protected, so that only those with the right authority are able to use this facility. We will show you how to create a decent password-protected page in next month's issue.

This script uses the **mail()** function of PHP in order to send emails, and it's very important that this is enabled on your server. If you are in any doubt, or if the script doesn't work whatever you do, try and get in touch with your system's administrator and see if the **mail()** function has been enabled on your system.

Jargon buster

SQL

SQL, or Structured Query Language, is used to 'query' databases, retrieving, manipulating, deleting and creating info with a few lines of code. It has been an industry standard since 1986, and is supported by the majority of relational databases (eg Access and Oracle).

Command Prompt

This is where you enter commands directly into your OS. On Windows 95/98/2000 and XP the Command Prompt harks back to MS-DOS, and can be found by going to Start, Programs, Accessories, Command Prompt. You can usually get to the relevant directory for MySQL by typing 'cd mysql' then 'cd bin'.

```
else {
    $email = $_POST["email"];
    @ $connect = mysql_pconnect();
    mysql_select_db("mailinglist");
if (mysql_num_rows(mysql_query("SELECT id FROM list
    WHERE email = '".$email."'"))) {
echo "<p>This email is already registered on our
    system. There is no need to subscribe
    again.</p>"; }
else {
    $remove = crypt($email, (string)getdate());
mysql_query("INSERT INTO list VALUES (null,
    '".$email."', '".$remove."')");
echo "<p>You have been subscribed to our mailing
    list. Thank you for joining.</p>"; } } } } ?>
</body>
</html>
```

3 Testing, testing...

If the form has been submitted, the script performs a number of tests. First it checks to see if the email is already registered. If it is, it displays a message to that effect. If it is not, an encrypted removal key is generated, and the email and key are inserted into the database.

```
<html><head><title>Remove</title></head><body> <?
if ($_POST["remove"]) {
    @ $connect = mysql_pconnect();
    mysql_select_db("mailinglist");
    $remove = $_POST["remove"];
if (mysql_num_rows(mysql_query("SELECT id FROM
    list WHERE remove = '".$remove."'"))) {
    mysql_query("delete from list where remove =
    '".$remove."'"); }
else { echo "The removal key was not recognised";
    } } }
```

4 Next part – the removal key

The next part of our script allows the user to remove themselves from the database. They need to insert their removal key in order to do this. It first checks to see if the removal key has been recognised, and if it has, removes the corresponding email from the database.

```
<html><head><title>Send Mail</title></head>
<body> <?
if (!$_POST["message"]) { ?>
<form action='sendmail.php' method='post'>
<p>In order to send an email to the people on your
    mailing list, insert the subject and message
    below, and click 'Send'.</p>
<p>Subject<br>
<input type='text' name='subject' size='50'></p>
<p>Message<br>
<textarea cols='60' rows='20'
    name='message'></textarea>
</p>
<p><input type='submit' value='Send'></p>
</form> <? }
```

7 Last part of the script

Now onto the last part of our script. Create a new text message named 'sendmail.php' and enter the above code. This is the form that allows the administrator to input the message they send to the mailing list. Its page should be password-protected (more on that next month).

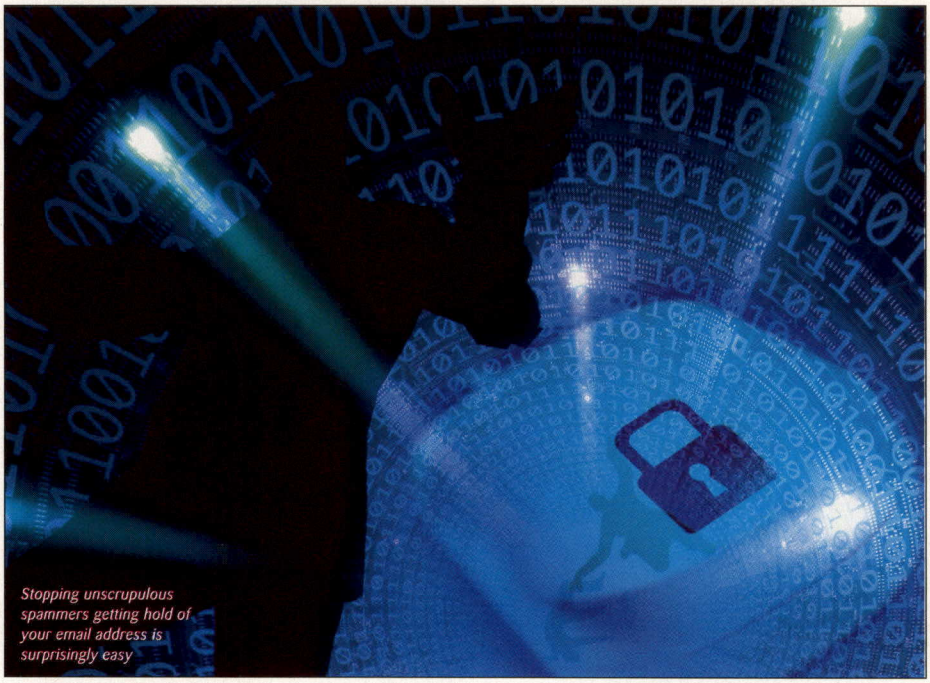
```
else {
if (!$_POST["subject"]) { echo "<p>You must enter a sub-
    ject in order to post a message.</p>"; }
    else {
      $subject = $_POST["subject"];
      $message = strip_tags(stripslashes($_POST["mes-
    sage"]));
      $email = $_POST["email"];
      @ $connect = mysql_pconnect();
      mysql_select_db("mailinglist");
      $results = mysql_query("SELECT email FROM list");
      $list = mysql_fetch_array($results);
            for ($i = 0; $i <
    mysql_num_rows($results); $i++) {
@ $err = mail($list[i], $subject, $message, "From: nore-
    ply@yoururl.com\nReply-To: noreply@yoururl.com"); }
      echo "<p>Messages sent.</p>" } } ?>
</body>
</html>
```

8 Messages to everybody

This part of the script is the bit that sends messages to every single person on our database. It first checks to make sure it has everything it needs, then sends all of this using the **mail()** function.

Q&A
Webmaster Q&A

JAMES SEABRIGHT ANSWERS YOUR WEB SITE BUILDING QUERIES. EMAIL HIM AT **HELPDESK@PARAGON.CO.UK**



Stopping unscrupulous spammers getting hold of your email address is surprisingly easy

Protecting privacy, stopping spam

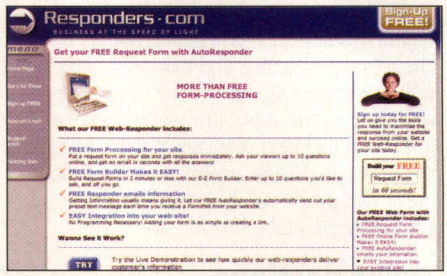
Q I run a classified musical instrument Web site (**www.musicalinstrumentsales.co.uk**) on which advertisers have a link from their advert to their email address. The only word that appears on the advert is 'email', but when this is clicked Outlook opens and their address appears in the 'To' line. Is it possible to show only the message line and protect the privacy of the advertisers by not showing their email addresses? Also, is there any way of preventing scammers collecting email addresses from the HTML code?

Andy Lovell

A **Your first problem is easily solved by changing from your current use of the 'mailto' method to a form-based approach for contacting advertisers. This involves creating a fill-in form which the visitor completes in their Web browser. On clicking 'Submit' their information will be transmitted via a form-to-mail script, which will generate an email to the desired person. This form approach will also make your site more universally accessible. The major downside of the 'mailto' method is that it relies on the visitor having a correctly configured browser, which will open their preferred email software to send the message. This is often not the case, for example with anyone accessing the site from a computer that is not their own, or at a cybercafe. It also stops you from being able to structure their response to an advertisement, whereas on a form you can stipulate that specific information is provided before the message can be sent. Your ISP, Clara.net (and most other providers of Web space), offers a form-to-mail script as a standard part of its hosting package. To read more about that go to www.clara.net/support/webindex.phtml. Alternatively, anyone can make use of a free form-to-email service such as www.responders.com or www.response-o-matic.com, and for those who are allowed to install their own scripts on the Web server they use, the**

musicalinstrumentsales.co.uk
Second Hand, Used Musical Instruments For Sale and Wanted
Website
Welcome to musical instrument sales where you can buy, sell and advertise all Musical Instruments, both secondhand/used and new.
Over 380,000 Hits in June 03.
Hundreds of Musical Instrument adverts.
Advertise for Musical Instruments Wanted.
No commission charged on sales.
Dealers and Shops listed.
click here to advertise
website comments
second-hand/used musical instruments for sale and wanted
Strings
Woodwind
Brass
Keyboards
Guitars
Percussion

*Andy's site at **www.musicalinstrumentsales.co.uk** needs some attention to solve problems he's been experiencing with the 'mailto' method of sending an email from a Web page*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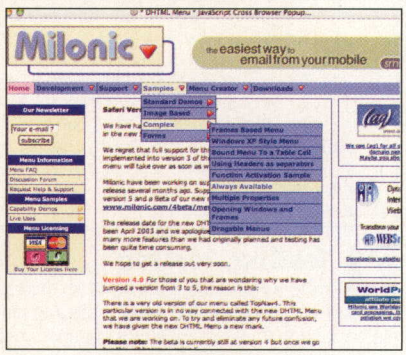
MORE THAN FREE FORM-PROCESSING
What our FREE Web-Responder includes:
FREE Form Processing for your site
FREE Form Builder Makes It EASY!
FREE Responder emails information
EASY Integration into your web-site!
Wanna See It Work?
TRY

*As well as providing a free form-to-email gateway, **www.responders.com** has an online form-building tool to help those unfamiliar with how to make one themselves*

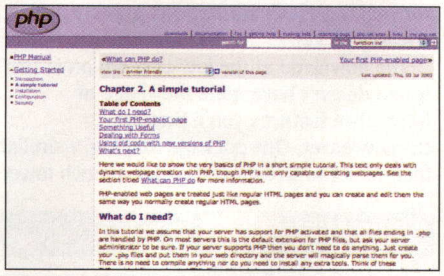
Reader's tip



Navigational nirvana

HAVING READ YOUR regular reminders about the importance of making an easy-to-use navigation system when designing a Web site, I was delighted to come across a pre-wrapped dynamic HTML menu system at **www.milonic.co.uk** which makes the task a whole lot easier. Better still, it's free to most non-commercial users! There are plenty of configurable options, so there's no danger of making a menu which looks like someone else's. You can make the menu 'stick' on the page regardless of where the user scrolls to, and it can be either vertical or horizontal. It can contain hierarchical pop-up menus, so you could have quite a complex site navigation bar with only a small footprint. I hope you can pass this tip on in the pages of your magazine, as I'm sure other readers would find it useful.

Margaret Brochu



The long-term growth of Andy's site would be well served by a conversion to a PHP/MySQL-based system. You can read more about PHP basics at ***www.php.net/tut.php***

universally standard script is the one available freely from www.scriptarchive.com/formmail.html.

However, even using a form-to-mail script will not solve your second problem of exposing people's email addresses to spam as a result of them being published on a Web page. Even when hidden in the source code of a page, email addresses are still at risk of finding their way onto junk mailers' lists. In any case, you are also concerned about protecting advertiser anonymity by not making their email addresses available in any way. The only way around this is to either find or create a more complex script than the standard form-to-mail one, which only identifies advertisers by ID number in the page code and then translates that into an email address by looking it up from a file stored on your Web server. This could be created quite simply using PHP – it doesn't necessarily demand the involvement of a database but that's certainly an option. Indeed, converting your whole site to be database-driven would open the door to making it much more expandable and user-friendly. Head along to www.php.net/tut.php if you'd like a gentle introduction to PHP.

Sounding off

Q As I'm sure you know, <embed> is a deprecated tag, but it still works in some browsers. In Internet Explorer 6 you can get <object> to play music and, using a simple bit of JavaScript, make it stop and start, as I have done at **www.talking.co.uk**. But what about Mozilla and Opera? They seem to be browsers that, although 'standards compliant', just don't deal with multimedia unless you use Flash or a visible Java-based player, which seems pretty pointless really. Can you shed any light on this?

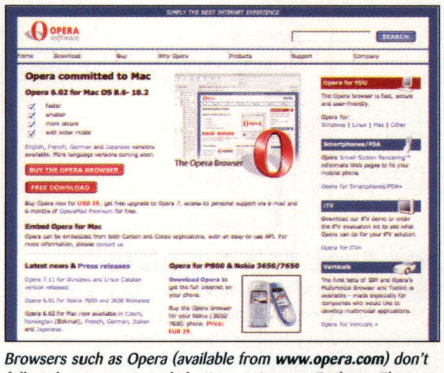
Rob Cameron

A **There are no major compatibility issues about using the OBJECT tag to get a sound played reliably in any of the major browsers you mention. For guidance on how to convert your existing EMBED tags into OBJECT ones, for maximum compatibility, refer to the article at www.mozilla.org/docs/web-developer/upgrade_2.html and the useful DevEdge article linked to from that page. For a basic primer on the proper way of providing an auto-starting sound sample on a page, the code you need is as follows: <object><param name="hidden" value="true"><param name="loop" value="false"><param name="autostart" value="true"><param name="src" value="music.wav"></object>.**

You may well run into trouble trying to control this with JavaScript, as different browsers implement scripting in different ways and some not at all. For purposes of efficiency it may well be more sensible to make a Flash movie with the sound in that, as it will be stored efficiently and behave reliably across browsers. Flash movies don't have to be seen – just design their canvas to be tiny and to match the background colour of the Web page they're on.

Of course, none of the above accounts for the fact that having sounds automatically playing on a Web page is one of the most annoying things imaginable for the majority of site visitors. Not everyone looks at the Web from a place where it's appropriate or possible to have sound effects playing, and many people don't have the necessary sound equipment to hear the effect playing even if they want to. Why should these people's Web browsing experience be slowed – potentially to a snail's pace – to indulge the misguided whims of a Web designer? Sure, provide sound which people can opt to download and play, but in almost every instance it's best not to force a sound effect on visitors.

On a personal note, Web sound effects are annoying as they always seem to rear their ugly heads when I'm on the phone or listening to music. My normal reaction upon encountering a site with music I can't stop is to leave as quickly as possible. And I don't think I'm alone in that response – so please do think before using the tag provided above!



Browsers such as Opera (available from ***www.opera.com****) don't follow the same strange behaviour as Internet Explorer. They strive instead to observe the official standards of the Web* →

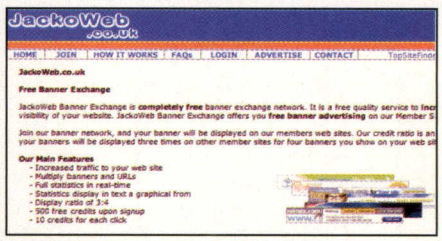
Readers' sites

Share your site with us – send the URL to **helpdesk@paragon.co.uk**

West Street Potters

URL: www.weststreetpotters.co.uk

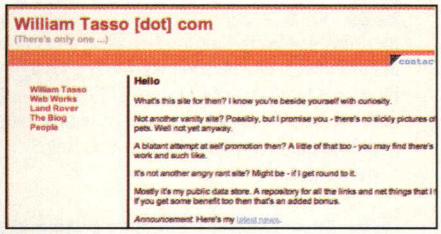
This site does a great job of showing off its pots, with a light and stylish design across all pages. Graphics are well sized and photos are clear and bright. It's a shame this is marred a little by the use of a Java applet in the gallery, where a page of thumbnails would've been more appropriate.



JackoWeb – James Jackson

URL: www.jackoweb.co.uk

James has ambitiously set up his own banner exchange system, offering very competitive deals. The site, which is the base for the system, is easy to navigate and use, but the graphic design isn't great. However, it's refreshing to see an independent Web resource site spring up.



William Tasso

URL: www.williamtasso.com

This is more traditional than the other sites we've mentioned above, and is worth highlighting as it makes great use of style sheets to create a good-looking site without too much in the way of fussy graphics. You could say it is a little light on content, but this is easily remedied with the strong structure and design present.

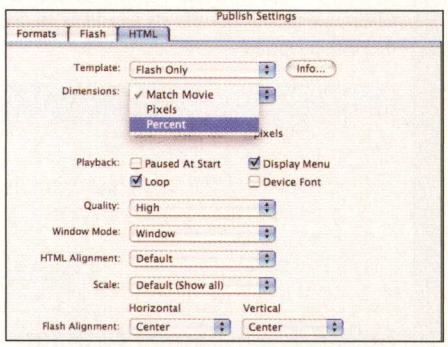
Q&A
Webmaster Q&A

Full-size flasher

Q I would like to set up my Flash movie so that it completely fills the browser window. I've tried adjusting its size, but there's always a border left in the browser, which is annoying. Is it possible to have it resize automatically, along with the browser window?

Tuppy Jakeways

A **By default, Flash MX publishes your movie so that it appears at its default size in the centre of an otherwise empty Web page. To change this so that it fills the browser window, you'll need to modify the way the movie is published. You can do this in 'Publish Settings', from the File menu. Click on the 'HTML' tab, and set the 'Dimensions' drop-down menu to 'Percent'. Make sure that the 'Width' and 'Height' boxes below are both '100'. Click 'Publish'. The movie will now expand or contract to fit the browser window.**



The Publish Settings dialogue in Flash holds the key to how your movies will look when exported for Web use

However, browsers will still leave a slim margin around the edge of their window, preventing your movie from completely filling it. To remove this, you'll have to modify the HTML of the Web page. Add the following style information just before the </head> tag of the page:

```
<style type="text/css">
<!–4
```

Interested in interactivity

Q I would like to create a dynamic, interactive site – what software would I need to do this? I'm also keen to make animation for the opening part of the site – could this be made by the same program?

Ilka Pashayev

A **Most Web site creation software now provides facilities for making a dynamic site, but that doesn't extend to actually creating graphics or animations. The best all-round solution for your needs would be to invest in Macromedia's Studio MX, which includes Dreamweaver to make interactive Web pages and Flash to create animation sequences. Their tight integration will make it easy to jump between the programs as you develop your site. Of course, the main problem with that as a solution is that Studio MX is very pricey – it costs £800. You can find an alternative and slightly less smooth solution by combining two lower-cost packages such as Namo Web Editor from www.namo.com/products/webeditor for the site design (a snip at only £65) and SWiSH from www.swishzone.com for making Flash animations quickly and cheaply (£32).**

The downside of the low-cost option is that Namo doesn't have quite the range of interactive features you'll find in Dreamweaver. One package that has a similar feature set to Dreamweaver for a much lower

*CoffeeCup's software package deal is very reasonable and worth considering if you want to stock your Web-building toolbox to bursting without spending a fortune – go to **www.coffeecup.com***

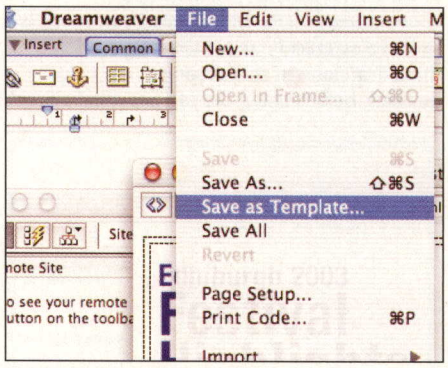
*Create Flash animations and movies without spending a fortune on the full-blown authoring software by getting hold of SWiSH from **www.swishzone.com**.*

Templates in Dreamweaver

Q I have created the graphic design for my home page in Photoshop 7. Having used the 'Save for Web' feature, I created a blank page in Dreamweaver MX and inserted the design onto the page. Now I want to turn that into a template with an editable region, to make creating extra pages as quick as possible. Can you help?

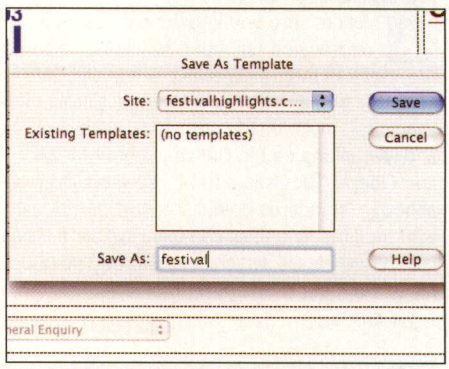
Pauline Golding

A **Dreamweaver's template system is very flexible and makes it easy to create and maintain large sites. One of its best features is the ability to choose if template changes will be applied to all pages, so it's easy to alter your site at any point. This is where editable regions come in, as they're the parts of the page where content goes, and aren't affected by changes to the master template. The steps show how to turn a page into a template, add editable regions and create a new page based on the template.**



1 Save as a template

With the file you want to turn into a template open in Dreamweaver, click 'File' and select 'Save as Template'. If you've made changes that you want saved in a non-template form, make sure you do that first, using the normal 'Save' or 'Save As' options.



2 Naming the template

Templates are saved in a special directory and with a different file name extension to normal pages. You'll be asked to give the template a name, which will then appear in the Template list when you go to create a new page based on a template design.

price tag is Microsoft FrontPage 2002 (£140). This could still be easily combined with SWiSH or a similar budget Flash-creation package like Coffee Cup Firestarter (www.coffeecup.com). Almost all the packages mentioned here are available in demonstration versions that will allow you to see which best suits your needs before parting with your cash. Checking out lots of different demos may only be an option if you're using a broadband Net connection though, as the installers are generally very large downloads.

One site fits all

Q I'm planning a site that would offer free email services to the public, run instant messaging, video chats, online dating, pen pals, art exhibitions, and run daily information. What would your advice be on the kind of space I need to rent, the cost effects and a suitable host that I can rent a space from?

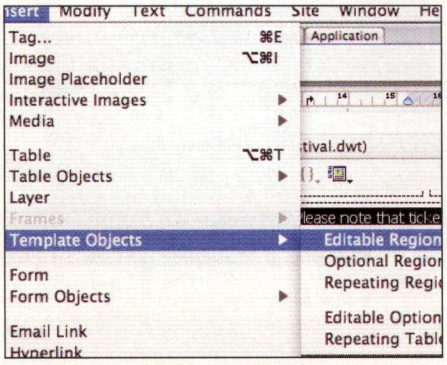
Bencola Obochi

A **This site sounds like quite an undertaking! Before we start to consider the technical aspect of your questions, it might be a good idea if you give some thought to your plans for the content of the site. It's always better to try to focus on one strong idea rather than trying to spread yourself too thinly. The breadth of site content that you describe could keep a large staff busy on a full-time basis – if you're attempting to make the site by yourself in your spare time, you're taking on something of an impossible challenge.**

As for the technical facilities that might be needed by such a site, it would be entirely possible to make most of the features you describe using a fairly standard Web hosting package, offering access to your own CGI-bin, PHP scripting, MySQL databases and access logging. In considering which Web provider would be best for you, take a look at an online directory of hosts such as uk.tophosts.com. If you're going to take payments from visitors for any of the services on offer, you should make sure to get a hosting account on which a secure server facility can be set up.

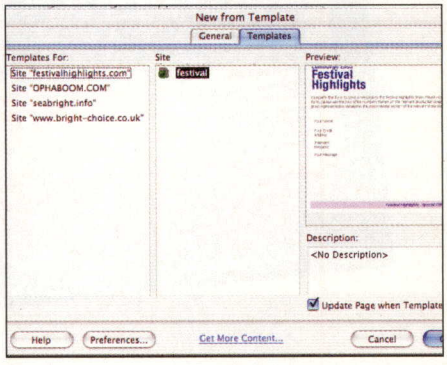
The instant messaging and video chat aspects of your grand plan would be more costly to accommodate – not least because video in any form takes up lots of bandwidth and places great demands on a server if used heavily. Instant messaging is less traffic-intensive but would demand a level of security clearance on a server not normally provided by a standard Web hosting account. You may want to consider renting a dedicated server, which is becoming an increasingly affordable thing to do, from budget server houses such as www.powerraq.com.

A useful directory of Web hosting providers is available at uk.tophosts.com



3 Create an editable region

To add to areas of the template, you must define editable regions. Either select items on the page you want to be editable or place the cursor where you want content added, open 'Insert' and hit 'Insert Editable Region' under 'Template Objects'.



4 Save template changes

When you've finished making the regions, save the template. Close the Template window, select 'New' from the File menu, click the 'Templates' tab and select the template you just created. A fresh document based on the template will be created.

Design doctor

Ray's Home Page

URL: www.rayspages.co.uk
Creator: Ray Neal

The Design doctor was delighted to hear that one of *Practical Internet*'s older readers has created his first Web site at the ripe old age of 75. This is an excellent first site and the doctor is keen to help this budding designer on to greater things with a few hints and tips on how to make the site look better.

Alignment angst

The way that Ray has aligned many of his page elements is a little awkward. Generally, it's a bad idea to right align anything on a Web page, because people with wide browser windows will end up with lots of space in the middle of the screen. When designing a page, it always pays to try seeing how it looks when you make your Web browser window smaller or larger.

Local linking

It's easy to make the mistake when using a Web design package of linking to images or other Web pages based on their location on your hard drive. This will lead to the links not working when the page is put online, as has happened in the case of the linked images on some of Ray's pages. The simple solution to this is to delete and remake the links. To avoid the problem altogether, the first thing you should do having created a new Web page is to save it. This will help the Web design package make links that will work when the page goes online.

Attention to detail

Missing images and spelling mistakes don't make a good impression on any Web site. Always go through your pages once they've been put online, to check that images appear correctly. This is also a good opportunity to reread the text on each page to make sure there are no errors. Most Web-building software has a spell check facility available too, which you could use to save manual proofreading time.

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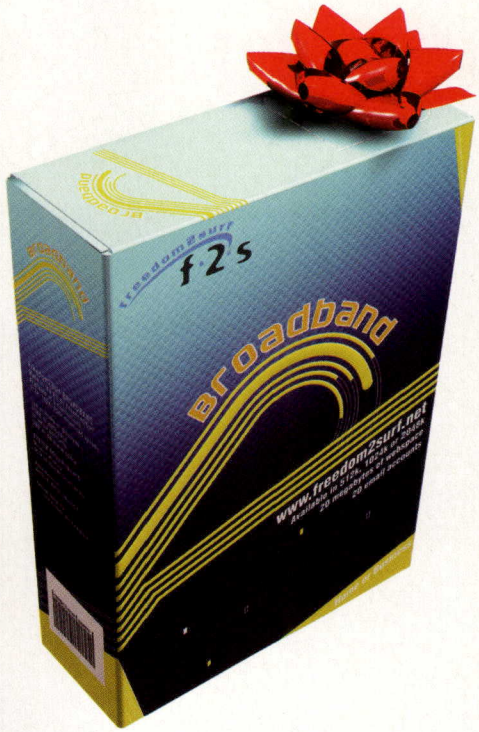
Do you want to get more out of your Internet experience? Tired of waiting for ages to get connected? Frustrated by the five-minute wait for your favourite Web site to download? Are you yearning to download the latest track from your favourite artist but would prefer for it not to take forever? Or is there a gaming demon inside you waiting to be unleashed? Our great Freedom2Surf broadband competition could be the answer to your prayers.

Freedom2Surf Home offers unlimited always-on Internet access with no extra call charges – you can even use the phone and surf at the same time. The ISP's package gives you a Net connection up to ten times faster than a normal modem, so you can load Web pages instantaneously, download files in a flash and enjoy rich multimedia content online. The package also includes 20 free email addresses and 20Mb of free Web space.

Imagine having this sort of speed at your fingertips for a whole year without having to pay a penny! That's what we're offering three lucky readers in our great Freedom2Surf broadband giveaway bonanza. All you have to do is answer a no-brainer of a question to stand a chance of getting a one-year subscription to the Freedom2Surf Home service, including an ADSL modem, worth over £400.

If you aren't successful don't despair, as you can now get free activation when you sign up for a Freedom2Surf Home account. The service costs just £22.50 per month and you can pick up all the necessary ADSL equipment including a Fujitsu modem for only £83. To order simply visit **www.freedom2surf.net** or call 01727 811530.



THE PRIZES

THREE lucky winners will scoop the following prize:

- **A one-year subscription to** Freedom2Surf **Home services including an ADSL modem. Worth a total of £400**

How to win

All you need to do to be in with a chance of grabbing a year's free broadband is to provide the answer to this simple question:

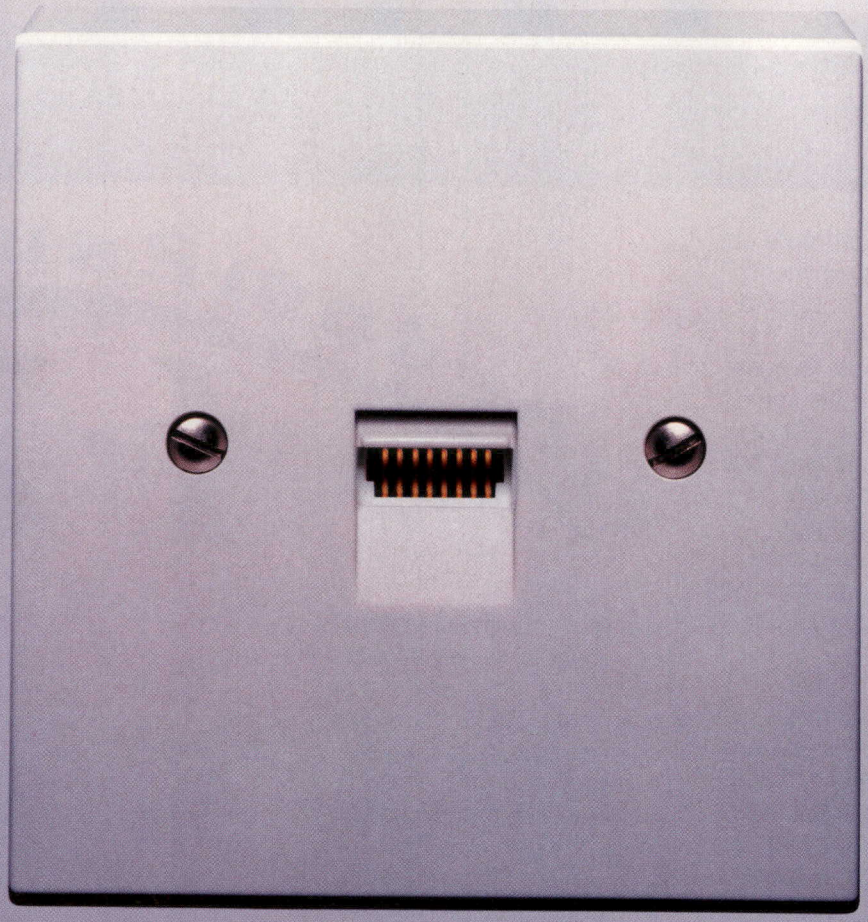
How many free email addresses do you get with the Freedom2Surf Home package?

a) 5 **b) 15** **c) 20**

- Winners must live near an ADSL-enabled BT exchange to receive the prize. An alternative of two years' free dial-up Internet access will be offered to winners who live outside an ADSL-enabled area.

Send your answer by email to 'pi@paragon.co.uk' putting 'Freedom2Surf' as the subject. Your answers should reach us by 17 September 2003. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number with your entry. Please also state whether or not you would be happy to receive correspondence from Paragon or third parties associated with Paragon Publishing.

THE RULES: Employees of Paragon Publishing, Freedom2Surf, their agents, wholesalers and their relatives may not enter. Participants must be over 18 years of age and resident in the UK. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Proof of postage cannot be accepted as proof of receipt and no responsibility can be accepted for lost, delayed or damaged entries.



Don't worry it won't bite

With **BT Openworld Anytime** you won't get any nasty surprises on your phone bill. We offer a flat rate fee, giving you 150 hours of surfing time a month for a low price of **£5.99** for the first month (£15.99 thereafter).

Call 0800 085 2823 or visit www.btopenworld.com

BT

Session limits and other conditions apply. BT Line required. Payable by Direct Debit, Visa, Visa/Delta & MasterCard. Not available on 128k ISDN connections.

Browsing

ESSENTIAL ADVICE ON GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR NET CONNECTION

WELCOME...

IS IT A bird, is it a plane? No it's another mighty instalment of the *PI* Browsing section, where we uncover the online hideouts of the greatest superheroes. We're not talking about mortal pin-ups like Alvin Stardust, David Soul or Trevor Brooking, but the gifted individuals with special powers who think nothing of risking their lives to save mankind (having said that, maybe Trevor Brooking should have been included).

After swooning over superheroes, you can arm yourself with your own special powers. Our action-packed browsing workshops will enable you to fly through the Web using Internet Macros, communicate instantly with people thousands of miles away with MSN Messenger, and be the master of MP3s thanks to our feature on getting the most out of the digital music format.

James Thornton,
Features Editor

ONLY THE STRONGEST WILL SURVIVE AS THE GREATEST COMIC-BOOK GOODIES DO BATTLE IN OUR GUIDE TO THE TOP SUPERHERO SITES ON THE WEB

Page 78

CALLING ALL THE HEROES

IMAGE CREDIT: © WARNER BROS/DC COMICS/THE KOBAL COLLECTION

What's inside...

78 **Find it now: Superheroes**
From the Webbed Wonder to the Caped Crusader, we check out the Web's greatest superheroes

80 **MP3 tips**
Rule the roost over your digital music with our essential MP3 tips

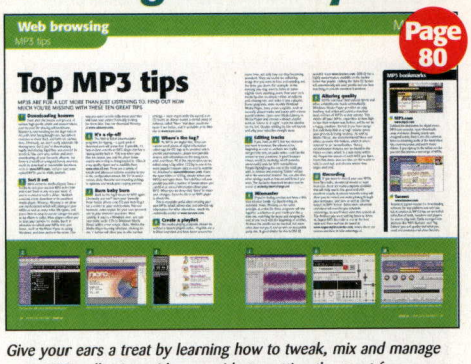
82 **Guide to MSN Messenger 6**
Chatting online is a gas gas gas with MSN's brand new IM client

84 **Fast browsing with Internet Macros**
Speed up your Web surfing by recording your online actions and playing them back

86 **Access newsgroups with NewsBin**
Download newsgroups quicker than ever before, thanks to this hot time-saving application

88 **Web browsing Q&A**
Let Danny McAleer soothe your connection aches and pains

Other gems in your browsing section...



Page 80

Give your ears a treat by learning how to tweak, mix and manage your MP3 collection with our guide to getting the most from everyone's favourite digital music format

Page 84

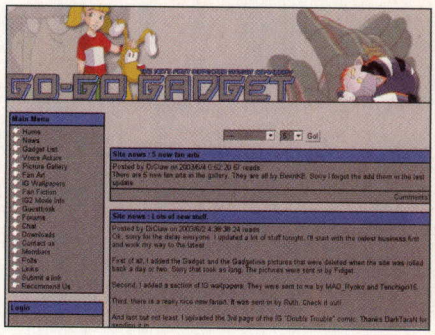
Save yourself a wadge of time and hassle by getting your PC to perform all your boring Net tasks for you, with the help of the splendid Internet Macros utility

Find it now: Superheroes

IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM AND NO ONE ELSE CAN HELP, WHY NOT TURN TO ONE OF THE WEB'S GREATEST SUPERHERO SITES?

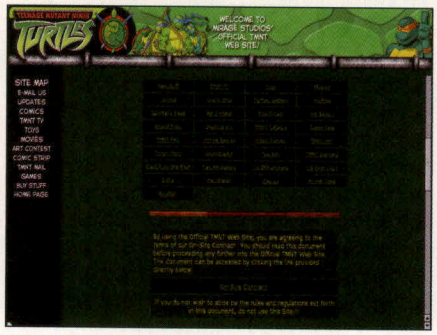
1 Inspector Gadget
www.inspector-gadget.net

While some debate has raged in the *PI* office over whether he can be classed as a superhero in the true sense of the word, the final verdict was that Inspector Gadget has special powers and rescues people, so he merits superhero status. This online tribute to the bungling bionic detective is well designed and houses masses of IG-related goodies including downloads, gossip and some rather impressive fan art and fiction.



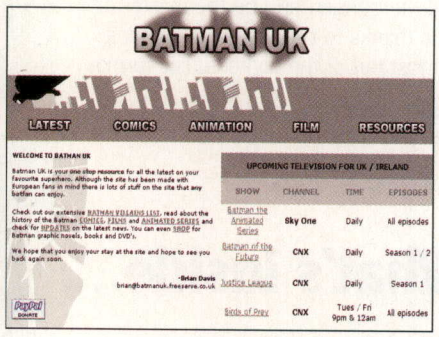
2 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
www.ninjaturtles.com

When these heroes hit our screens in 1988 they became revered by kids across the world, and before you could say 'cowabunga' everyone was wearing turtles slippers, drinking out of turtles mugs and eating turtles pizza. If you long to recreate the days when Leonardo and co ruled the sewers, slip down to this official site for info about the comic strip, the cartoon and the films.



3 Batman
www.batmanuk.freeserve.co.uk

There are surprisingly few decent sites devoted to the caped crusader, but this UK-based fan site is definitely worth a visit. Batman UK is stylishly designed and what it lacks in downloadable goodies or online games it makes up for in info, covering the history of the comics, cartoons and films. A gigantic Villains section charts Batman baddies down the years, including chillingly titled foes like Crazy Quilt and Kite Man. Ooh err.



4 Captain Scarlet
www.captainscarlet.tv

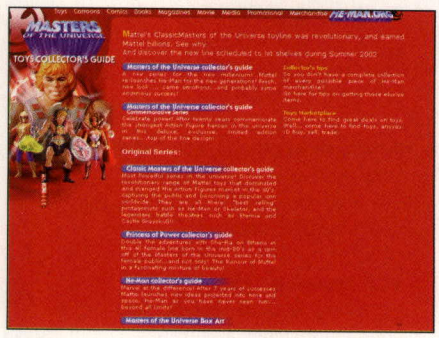
He may have been a puppet, but that didn't stop Captain Scarlet conquering all sorts of evil plastic villains. Fans will love the design and interactivity. The central part is Mission Command, where you assume the role of a Spectrum agent and compete in Flash games to rescue your allies. Complete the tasks quickly enough, and your name appears in lights on the high scores board.

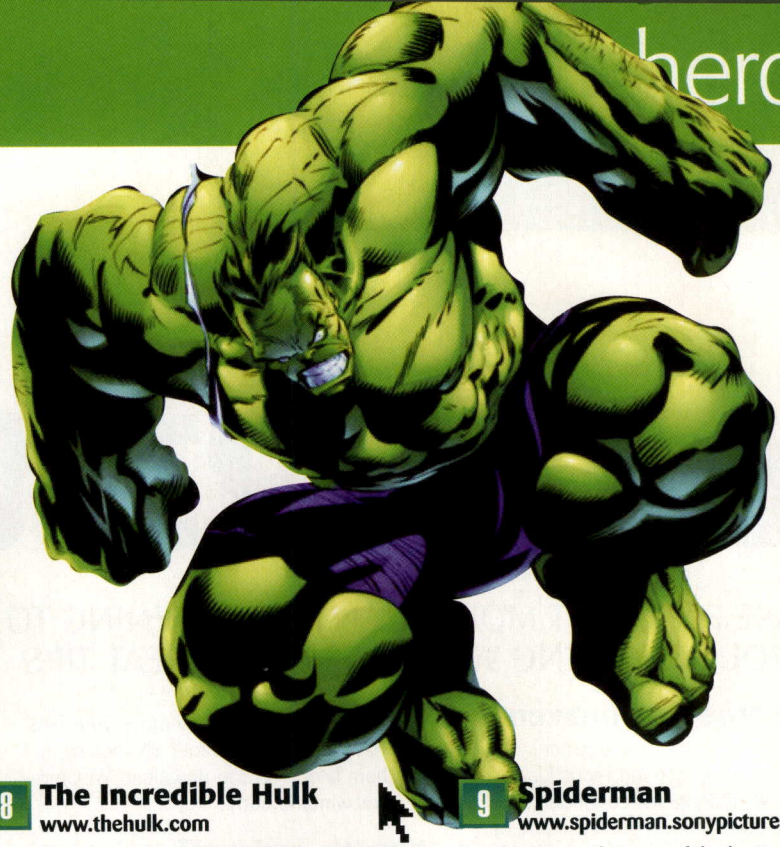
5 Daredevil
www.daredevilmovie.com

As the first blind man to rescue someone since Stevie Wonder teamed up with Paul McCartney, Daredevil set the box office alight with his extra-sensory powers last summer. This official site of the movie is one of the best superhero tributes you'll see. As well as reading about the film and its cast, you can view the theatrical trailer and download Daredevil-related wallpapers.

6 He-Man
www.he-man.org

The man who bragged "I have the power" certainly had an influence on the toy market in the early Eighties, when kids everywhere snapped up replica figures of bizarre characters from the hit cartoon. He-Man's online home is just as impressive as his Castle Greyskull residence, and is bursting with info on every aspect of the show. There's even a He-Man Auctions section.





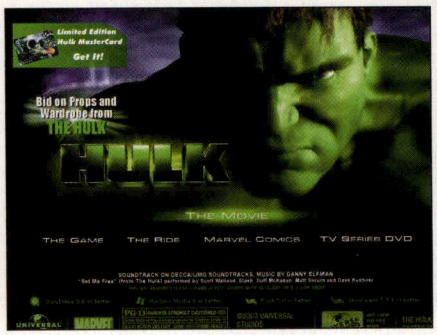
"The Hulk makes Mike Tyson look like a member of the school chess team"

7 Superted
www.superted.tv

One of the most unlikely superheroes, Superted scores highly on our chart due to this beautifully crafted Flash affair. The winged teddy bear and his mate, Spottyman, play a starring role in the site which is navigable from the colourful rocket cockpit console on the home page. Highlights of the super site include some impressive games, interactive character profiles and a bumper selection of downloadable desktop delights.

8 The Incredible Hulk
www.thehulk.com

The Hulk makes Mike Tyson look like a member of the school chess team, and since the movie release the big lad's profile has increased hugely. This site has more biographies, interviews and production notes than you'll find on a DVD, and includes a brilliant potted history of his rise from early Marvel outings in the Sixties to silver screen superstardom today. Fans will also love the great Flash games and the amazing Science section.

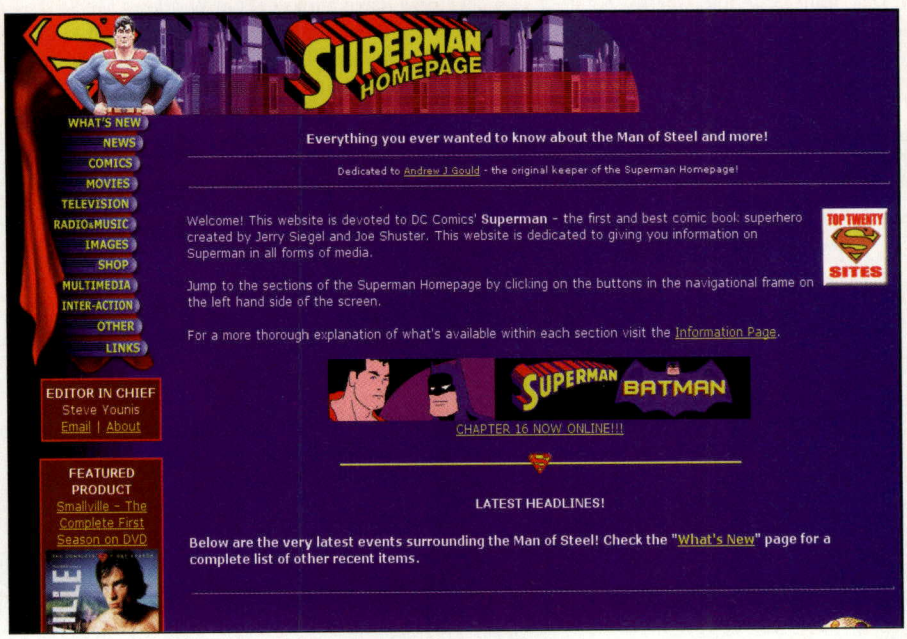


9 Spiderman
www.spiderman.sonypictures.com

It makes sense that one of the best superhero sites is devoted to someone who knows a thing or two about webs. Spidey has come a long way since his Marvel comics beginnings and already has a blockbuster flick under his belt. Though it lacks info on the comic or cartoon, this movie site has a stunning interface and loads of trailers, behind-the-scenes footage and downloadable content. There's even an online *Daily Bugle!*

10 Superman
www.supermanhomepage.com

The Man of Steel is the original all-action superhero, and this Web site provides a fitting tribute to the handsome hunk, played by the likes of Christopher Reeve and Dean Cain down the years. The Superman home page embraces every aspect of the life of Clark Kent's alter ego, including his comic book, film, television and animated series appearances. As well as stacks of information, the site delivers an unbelievable amount of downloadable freebies including wallpapers of the Superman logo, sound clips of the 1940s Superman radio show, movie files, fonts, games and even skins for The Sims. The Inter-action section provides a route for gabbing away to fellow Superman worshippers around the planet. As perhaps the most detailed superhero site around, you'll even find recipes for making 'Superman cookies' within the Superman home page. The mind boggles.


SUPERMAN HOMEPAGE
WHAT'S NEW
NEWS
COMICS
MOVIES
TELEVISION
RADIO&MUSIC
IMAGES
SHOP
MULTIMEDIA
INTER-ACTION
OTHER
LINKS
EDITOR IN CHIEF
Steve Younis
Email | About
FEATURED PRODUCT
Smallville - The Complete First Season on DVD
Everything you ever wanted to know about the Man of Steel and more!
Dedicated to Andrew J Gould - the original keeper of the Superman Homepage!
Welcome! This website is devoted to DC Comics' Superman - the first and best comic book superhero created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. This website is dedicated to giving you information on Superman in all forms of media.
Jump to the sections of the Superman Homepage by clicking on the buttons in the navigational frame on the left hand side of the screen.
For a more thorough explanation of what's available within each section visit the Information Page.
TOP TWENTY SITES
SUPERMAN BATMAN
CHAPTER 16 NOW ONLINE!!!
LATEST HEADLINES!
Below are the very latest events surrounding the Man of Steel! Check the "What's New" page for a complete list of other recent items.

Top MP3 tips

MP3S ARE FOR A LOT MORE THAN JUST LISTENING TO. FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU'RE MISSING WITH THESE TEN GREAT TIPS

1 Downloading heaven

Even after the moans and groans of various high profile artists and record labels, peer-to-peer file sharing still continues. Napster is now treading on the legal side of the path after being bought out, but others continue to share back and forth on various sites. Obviously, we don't really advocate file sharing here, but if you're downloading legally and sharing legal files, you cannot be touched. You can't jump online and start downloading all your favourite albums, but there is a wealth of unsigned bands and free music to download at respectable locations such as **www.MP3.com,** and you can even upload MP3s you've made yourself.

2 Sort it out

Most common media players have a facility to sort your current MP3 collection and order them in any way you want. If you're in need of such a player, Nullsoft provides a free download of its excellent media player, Winamp. Winamp is an all-in-one media centre which will catalogue your MP3s as well as many other file types, and place them in easy-to-access categories such as by album or artist. Most players allow you to scan your system for media, but it is advisable to collect your MP3s into one folder, such as My Music if you're using Windows, and then perform the scan. This way you won't accidentally move your files and have your player frantically looking for them later. You can download Winamp at **www.winamp.com.**

3 It's a rip-off

The Web is full of downloadable programs for ripping – a quick peek at download.com will prove that. If possible, it's best to have a media or MP3 player that has a ripping facility built in. This way when your files are ripped, you and the player know exactly where they're being copied to. CDex is a top quality ripper and is available from **www.cdex.n3.net**. There are a variety of simple and advanced features available to you in the configuration menus. Hit 'F4' to select various drive, filename and encoding settings to optimise and tweak your ripping process.

4 Burn baby burn

Back to the legal issues of MP3 again. Obviously you can't burn your favourite Peter Andre album onto CD and then flog it for a tenner to your mate's mum. You can however, make copies for your own personal use to play wherever you want. Most notably, if you're a Windows user, you can now make audio CDs in Windows Media Player within a few simple clicks. Within the Media Player burning interface, clicking on the 'i' button will allow you to alter various settings – most importantly the speed your CD burns at. Ahead makes a useful piece of software called 'Nero' that does much the same if not better, and is available at its Web site at **www.nero.com.**

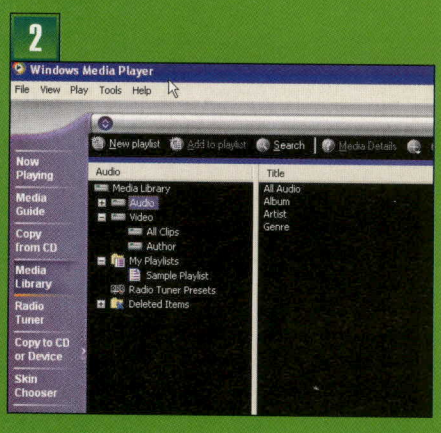
5 Where's the tag?

As MP3s are digital files, they can contain small pieces of digital information called tags (or ID3 tags to be precise) which provide your computer, player and portable devices with information on the song name, artist and album. All of this information can be edited using a Tag editor. 123Tag is one of the more popular freeware options and is available for download at **www.midirunner.com**. From the open folder in 123Tag, simply select your MP3(s) and open them. The interface will now provide you with a number of boxes where you can fill in or amend information about your MP3. When you are done click 'Save' to retain your changes. Open the file in an MP3 player to check this.

This is especially useful when creating your own MP3s, which will not start out with ID3 tag information. For other alternatives, check the multimedia section of **www.tucows.com.**

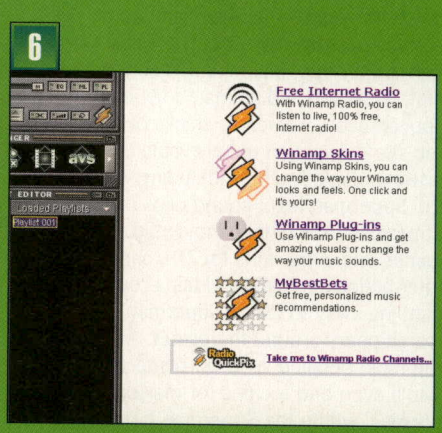
6 Create a playlist

No media-playing program should be without a decent playlist editor. Playlists are a brilliant invention and have been around for



Sort your files with ease in Windows Media Player

Burn 'til your heart's content with the excellent Nero 5


6
Free Internet Radio
With Winamp Radio, you can listen to live, 100% free, Internet radio!
Winamp Skins
Using Winamp Skins, you can change the way your Winamp looks and feels. One click and it's yours!
Winamp Plug-ins
Use Winamp Plug-ins and get amazing visuals or change the way your music sounds.
MyBestBets
Get free, personalized music recommendations.
Take me to Winamp Radio Channels...

Set up playlists and more with Nullsoft's Winamp

some time, yet only now are they becoming prevalent. They are useful for collecting songs that you want to hear and weeding out the ones you don't. For example, in the evening you may want to listen to some slightly more soothing music than your rock tracks by day, so simply collect an eclectic and relaxing mix, and make it into a playlist. Some programs, most notably Windows Media Player, have preset playlists, such as recently played tracks and tracks with a lower overall volume. Open your Media Library in Media Player and choose a default playlist, such as 'Listen to at night', from the window on the left. Double clicking its title will launch and play your selection straight away.

7 Editing tracks

If you have an MP3 that has elements you want to remove, like silence at the beginning or end, or perhaps two tracks merged into one, an audio editor could be the answer to your problems. A good freeware choice would be Audacity, which provides many useful tools for MP3 manipulation. Simply highlighting the area of the track you wish to remove and pressing 'Delete' will get rid of the unwanted material. You can also alter other settings such as Volume and Echo if you wish. The Audacity download location can be found at **audacity.sourceforge.net**

8 Mixmaster

If you're feeling creative and have a little time on your hands, try downloading an automatic mixer. Working on the same principle as a club DJ, these programs will mix together a selection of your tracks just like a club mix, matching the beats and merging the end of one track with the beginning of another. At times the results can be comical, but more often than not you'll end up with an acceptable party mix. A good choice for this is DSS DJ available from **www.tucows.com**. DSS DJ has a highly useful feature available on the toolbar below the playlist: clicking the 'Auto-DJ' button will automatically mix your playlist and use beat matching to provide seamless transitions.

9 Altering quality

MP3s can have their volume levels and other amendments made automatically. Windows Media Player provides an easy levelling tool which will select a standard level and set all MP3s to that volume. This means all your MP3s, regardless of how high or low their volume was before, will be set to a happy medium. Perfect if you have songs that suddenly kick in at high volume when your granny is trying to sleep. As well as Media Player, the aforementioned Nero and others provide this feature, which is often referred to as 'normalisation'. Nero's normalisation features can be found in the Filters section, which is a sub-menu within the Properties screen of each MP3 you burn. From this menu you can also set the tracks to fade in and out, and choose where they begin and end.

10 Recording

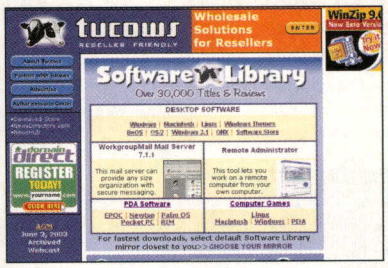
If you want to record your own MP3s from Net radio, an external source or even from CD, there are many programs available that will help you in this quest and with excellent results. A correct recorder setup will allow you to record any audio playing through your computer, and save as well as edit the output in MP3 format. Some more advanced recorders will even let you schedule recordings, so you'll never miss that episode of *The Archers* you were rushing home to listen to. Super MP3 Recorder is one of the best tools out there and can be found at **www.supermp3recorder.com**, where there are various versions to take advantage of.

MP3 bookmarks

MP3.com

www.mp3.com

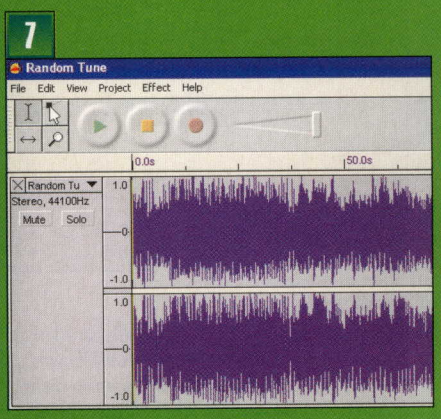
Dubbed *the* destination for digital music, MP3.com provides music downloads, news and more. Dealing mainly with unsigned artists, there's also the option to listen to streaming audio of the latest chart hits, read interviews and watch music videos. If you sign up to the online service you can also access a vast range of MP3s.



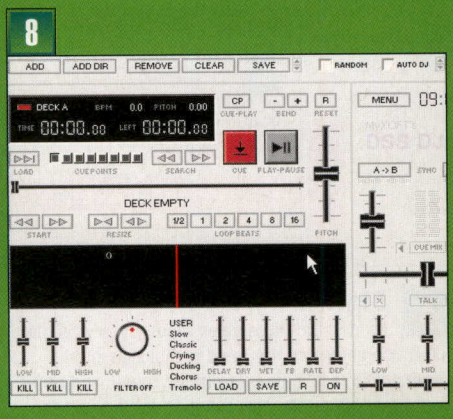
Tucows

www.tucows.com

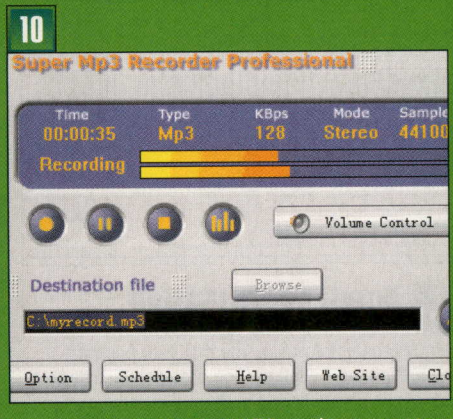
Tucows is a great source for downloading software for any platform and any task, but in relation to MP3 it has an unrivalled collection of tools, tweakers and players for you to play with. Easily arranged into sections like 'MP3 Burners' and 'Tag Editors' you will quickly find what you need and probably a lot more besides.



Cut the rubbish out of your MP3s with Audacity's freeware editor



Mix and crossfade like a pro with DSS DJ



Any audio source, any time, Super MP3 recorder comes out top

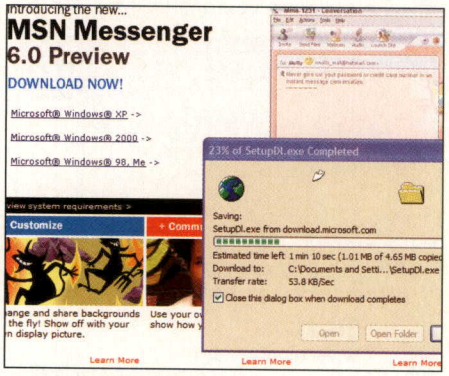
In brief:
Task: Master MSN Messenger 6
Software I need: Messenger 6 Client Download
Difficulty: It's real simple
Time I need: Allow at least 20 minutes

Stay in and meet people with MSN Messenger 6

BECOME AN ONLINE SOCIALITE AND MAKE CHAT FRIENDS ACROSS THE GLOBE WITH MICROSOFT'S BRILLIANTLY DYNAMIC MESSENGER 6

IT DOESN'T SEEM so long ago that having a pen pal was all the rage. No-one in the *PI* offices would admit to such behaviour of course, because the whole idea seems so twee these days. For the most part, email and SMS messaging have relegated those old pastimes to the realm of fading memories. What's more, Internet chat, or IRC, has provided a popular way to socialise online for ages. Pager-like desktop clients have gone some way to personalise the experience, and Microsoft's MSN Messenger has lead the way. The latest version, Messenger 6, looks to revolutionise online get-togethers even more, with a stack of multimedia tricks. If you have a Webcam and soundcard, you can enjoy full-on video and audio conversations, while the addition of multiplayer games adds a new dimension. Text talk gets an amusing overhaul with special emoticons that will convey your mood, while file sharing and mobile support cannot fail to impress.

The following tutorial will tell you everything you need to know from getting set up to whipping up a conversation, so sit back and look forward to making some new friends.



1 Download it

The Messenger 6 site is easily accessed from MSN's home page, and has links for getting the software for most Windows platforms. Select the one you need and hit 'Save' on the File Download dialog. The transfer will begin.

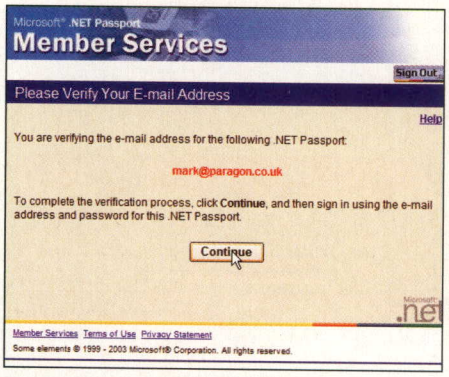
2 Register your details

You'll need a **.net** passport to use Messenger, so after download, follow the link to get an account. The Passport home page has a link to sign up, so follow it to enter an email address, password and security code. A confirmation email will be sent to you.

MSN Messenger 6.0 Setup
Welcome to MSN Messenger 6.0 Setup
This wizard will help you install MSN Messenger 6.0 on your computer.
If you currently have another version of Messenger on your computer, please close it now. To do this, right-click the Messenger icon in your Windows system tray (usually in the lower-right corner of your screen), and then click Exit.
Click Next to continue, or click Cancel to close this wizard.
Set my browser home page to MSN Home (recommended)
< Back
Next >
Cancel

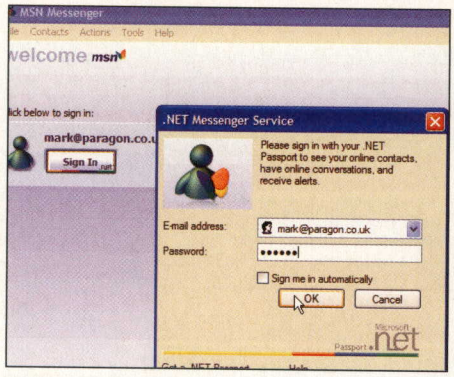
3 Install the software

Launch the Downloaded Installation file and follow the few necessary steps to get started. Accept the licence agreements and default destination paths, and you should get a prompt acknowledging installation success.


Microsoft® .NET Passport
Member Services
Sign Out
Please Verify Your E-mail Address
Help
You are verifying the e-mail address for the following .NET Passport:
mark@paragon.co.uk
To complete the verification process, click Continue, and then sign in using the e-mail address and password for this .NET Passport.
Continue
Member Services Terms of Use Privacy Statement
Some elements © 1999 - 2003 Microsoft® Corporation. All rights reserved.

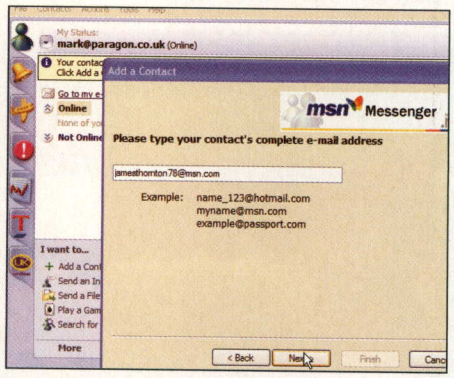
4 Email confirmation

Your inbox should contain some messages from Microsoft informing you that your passport account is ready. Click the link provided to activate it, and you'll be transported to the page above. Follow the instructions to verify everything.



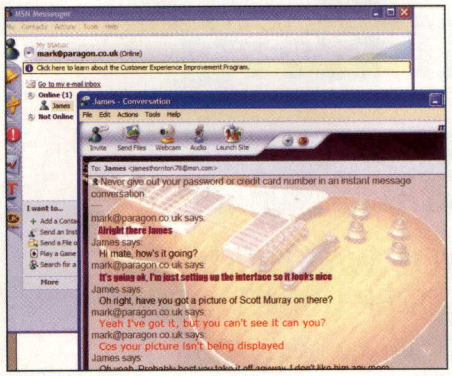
5 Sign in

Launch the Messenger client – you won't find too much going on. You need to first sign in by clicking 'File' and 'Sign In' from the menu, and enter your passport details. You can then set the client to log you in automatically, and declare any other users.



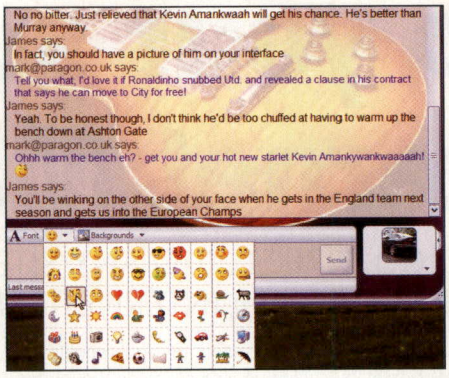
6 Hook up

Messenger enables you to find your friends really easily. If you know someone's email ID you can enter it directly. Click 'Contacts' on the main menu, then 'Add a Contact' to enter the address. The new contact will be listed.



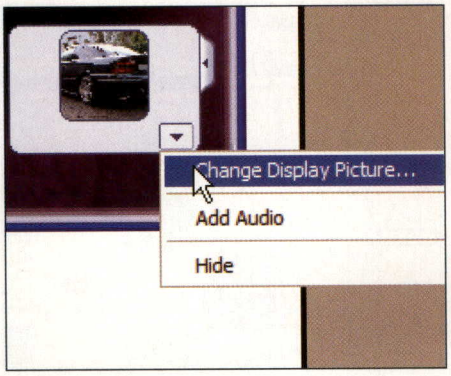
7 Chatting away

If your friends are online you can invite them for a chat by double-clicking their icon. They'll be prompted to join in and you can then type messages using the bottom panel. You can also set text styling and colour by clicking 'Font' before pressing 'Send'.



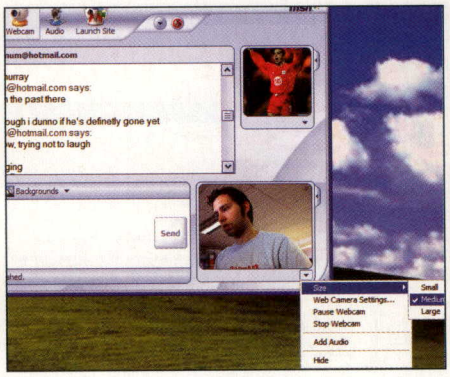
8 It's been emotional

Remember when keyboard character-based smileys were cool? Messenger has replaced them with more effective 'emoticons'. These icons can be used to convey what you're thinking and you can set specific text phrases that will insert them into your sentences.



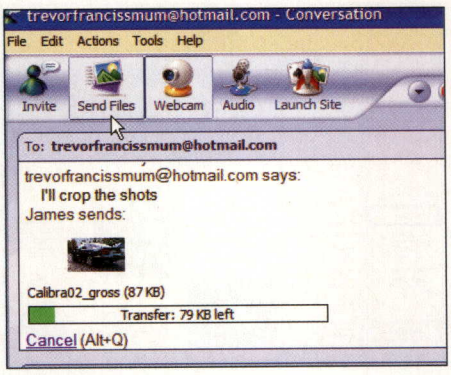
9 Define your identity

Two boxes display default images to define your identity. The top box represents your friend, and the second defines your identity to your chatting compadres. Click the arrow to drop down a menu and make your own selection.



10 Video chatting

Starting a video conversation is easy if your camera is set up properly. Click the 'Webcam' button to start streaming content to your friend, and vice versa if they have a camera. You'll see both, and can resize the viewing panes via drop-down menus.



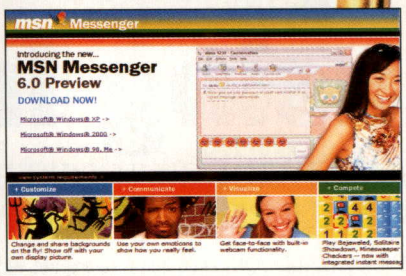
11 File share

You can send someone a file by clicking on 'Send Files'. You'll need to browse for what you're sending, but once it's located the transfer will begin. A progress indicator will appear in the Chat window to let you know how much has been delivered.

12 Fun 'n' games

There's much fun to be had under Messenger's Actions menu, but the multiplayer games are probably the best. Classic Windows games are all there, and you can challenge a buddy by simply picking a game while chatting. Wait for others to join in and then play!

Web resources



MSN Messenger Home

www.msnmessenger-download.com/preview/

This is the URL where you can find the download. All the most recent Windows versions are covered and there are linked sections telling you about the key features that Messenger 6 has to offer.

Yahoo! Messenger Home

messenger.yahoo.com/

Unsurprisingly, there are many equivalents to MSN's Messenger client, and perhaps the most notable is Yahoo's. Available for PC and Mac, this client supports video chat and more, while a mini Web-based version can be launched without any download.

Power users' tip

TALKING WITH MESSENGER is not just about keeping in contact with those you already know, but striking up new friendships too. Similarly, you may find that searching MSN's member profiles leads you to stumble across old mates. If you're interested to see who's about, use Messenger's Contacts menu to 'Search for a Contact'. Click 'Advanced Search' and 'Browse Profiles by Interest' on the following page. Everyone is listed within topical categories, ranging from groups for football teams and pop bands to more social stuff like gossip or romance. By clicking on their ID names you can view further details such as interests and occupations, while many have photos for you to view. You can then email or message anyone you'd like to make contact with by clicking on the provided links.

In brief:
Task: Access the Web more quickly with Internet Macros
Software I need: iOpus Internet Macros
Difficulty: Easy peasy
Time I need: Not much compared to standard browsing techniques

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Speed up your surfing using Internet Macros

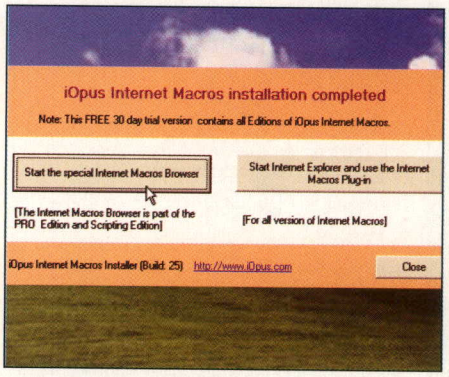
SAIL THROUGH THE WEB AND GO DIRECTLY TO ANY SITE YOU WANT WITH A SINGLE CLICK, BY SETTING UP MACROS IN INTERNET EXPLORER USING IOPUS

EVER WISHED YOU could fast-forward the Web to get straight to the best sites without having to wade through search engines, password screens and broken links? You need dream no longer, as it's now possible to zip directly to any site whether it's your Webmail account, favourite news site or your online bank account, through the use of iOpus Internet Macros.

iOpus gives you the power to avoid repetitive Web tasks by setting up a macro to do the job for you. All you do is record your action once, then replay it with a single mouse click. You needn't worry about security either, as all data is only stored on your local PC in transparent text files that you can read and edit with passwords stored using industry-standard Blowfish encryption.

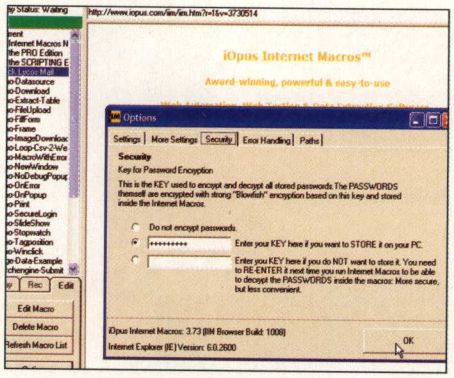
Best of all, Internet Macros is fully transportable, meaning it can run on any machine that has iOpus installed. It can also be integrated with other apps, such as scheduling software, thanks to its support for command-line options.

So why wade through unnecessary protocol? Cut to the chase online in a single click, after following the steps outlined in our guide.


iOpus Internet Macros installation completed
Note: This FREE 30 day trial version contains all Editions of iOpus Internet Macros.
Start the special Internet Macros Browser
Start Internet Explorer and use the Internet Macros Plug-in
[The Internet Macros Browser is part of the PRO Edition and Scripting Edition]
[For all version of Internet Macros]
iOpus Internet Macros Installer (Build: 25) http://www.iOpus.com
Close

1 Open the browser

Once you've installed iOpus and launched the program you'll be presented with this screen, which lets you choose to use IE with the Internet Macros plug-in or the special Internet Macros browser. We'll choose the customised browser.

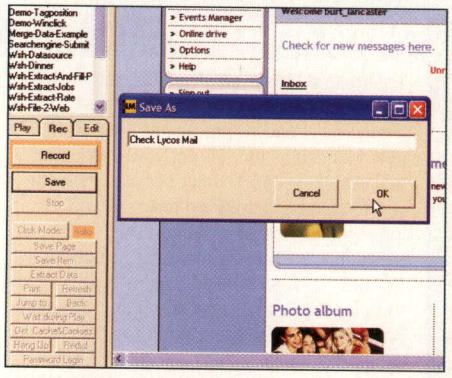

iOpus Internet Macros™
Award-winning, powerful & easy-to-use
Options
Settings
More Settings
Security
Error Handling
Paths
Security
Key for Password Encryption
Do not encrypt passwords.
Enter your KEY here if you want to STORE it on your PC.
Enter your KEY here if you do NOT want to store it. You need to RE-ENTER it next time you run Internet Macros to be able to decrypt the PASSWORDS inside the macros: More secure, but less convenient.
Edit Macro
Delete Macro
Refresh Macro List
OK

2 Begin recording

The Internet Macros browser will be launched and you'll be presented with the program's Start page. You can now create a macro by recording your online actions. Click the 'Rec' tab in the menu at the bottom of the screen and click the 'Record' button.

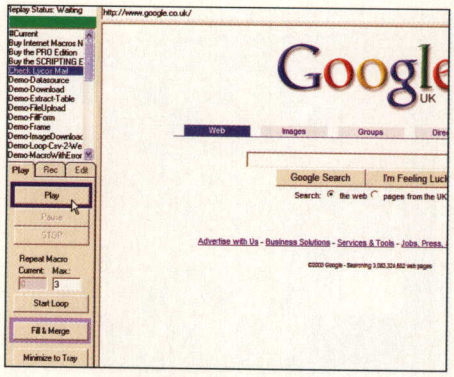
3 Spring into action

Now simply carry out an online task at your leisure. Internet Macros will record every action you make along the way, from re-sizing the browser window to entering your username and password, displaying the command in a window on the left.



4 Store the macro

After completing the online task or accessing your account, click 'Stop' in the Record menu. You'll now need to store your macro by clicking 'Save' and entering an appropriate filename. Try to give the macro a name that reflects the task it will perform.

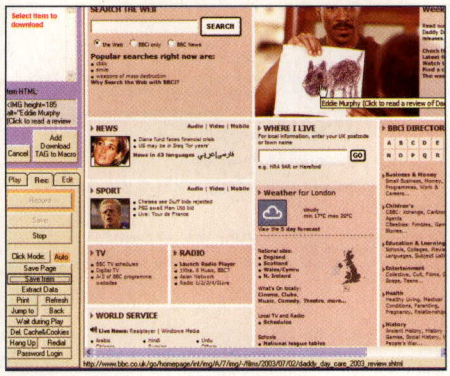


5 Play it again

The macro you've just created will now be saved and displayed in the 'Macro List' window. Now you can perform the Web process that just took you ages in an instant, by highlighting your saved macro and clicking on the 'Play' button within the Play tab.

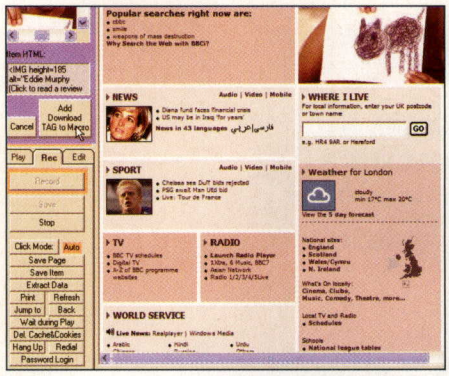
6 Speedy surfing

Sit back and watch as the browser automatically cycles through the pages you've programmed in, entering all the necessary passwords and sign-ins along the way to get you through the door in no time at all.



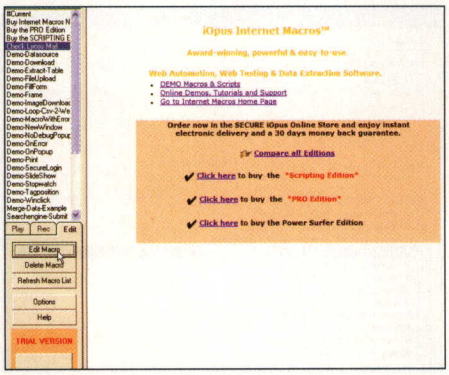
7 Downloading images

iOpus is also great for downloading images on the fly. To download an image, switch to the 'Recording' mode, navigate to the page where the image is contained and click 'Save Item'. Now click on the item you wish to capture.



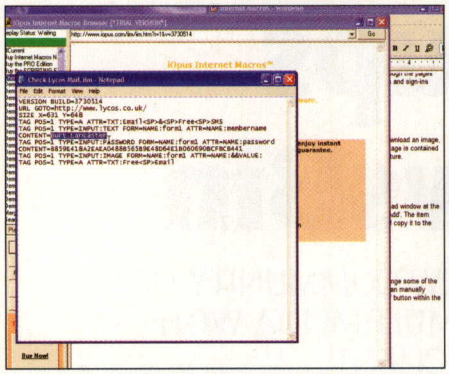
8 Item Download window

The image you selected is now displayed in the Item Download window at the top of the interface. If you're happy with the selection click 'Add'. The Item Download manager will add a tag line to your macro and copy it to Internet Macros' Download Directory.



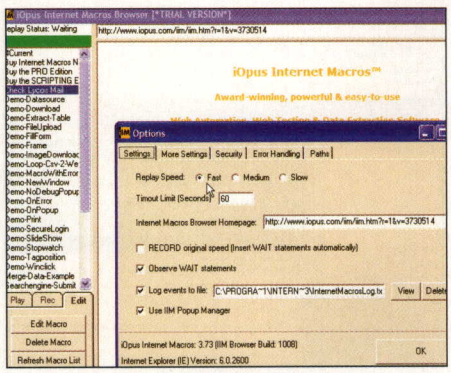
9 Edit your macros

It's possible to edit your macros within iOpus in order to change some of the values. The recorded macro is stored in a text file and you can manually tweak the macro by selecting it and clicking the 'Edit Macro' button within the Edit menu.



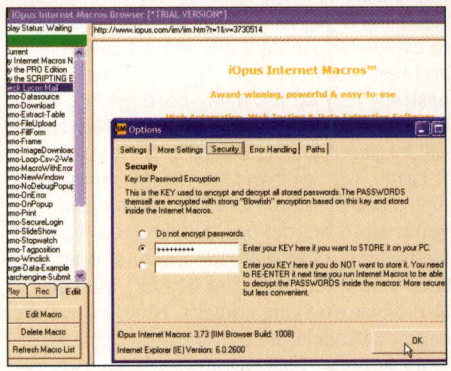
10 Tweak the text

You can now edit the variables within the macro if any of your details have changed, or if you wish to remove certain parts of the process. Simply alter the text in the appropriate command line and save the text document to effect the changes.



11 The need for speed

By clicking on the 'Options' button in the Edit menu you can alter some of Internet Macros' settings to improve your experience. The Settings tab lets you change the speed at which macros are replayed as well as specifying a Timeout limit for processes.



12 Security settings

Click on the 'Security' tab to configure password encryption for Internet Macros. This is the key used to encrypt and decrypt all stored passwords, which themselves are encrypted with Blowfish encryption technology and hidden inside the program.

Power users' tip

USE THE FOLLOWING commands to apply different functions to your macros

BACK
Goes back one step

CLEAR
Clears your browser cache and cookies

DISCONNECT
Hangs up the current dial-up connection. By adding the word REDIAL after the command you can change the IP address

EXTRACTPOPUP
Extracts data from a pop-up window, retrieving the text from the pop-up

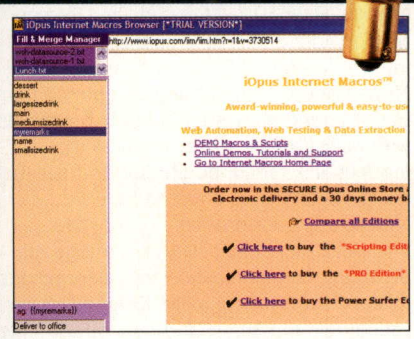
PRINT
Prints the current browser window

REFRESH
Refreshes the current browser window

STOPWATCH ID=MyName
Allows you to measure the response time of a Web site. The measured data is stored in the download directory of Internet Macros

URL GOTO=www.address.com
Navigates the browser to the URL you enter after the = command

Power users' tip



THE 'FILL & MERGE' function within Internet Macros provides an easy means of editing your data sources. The function can be accessed by clicking on the 'Fill & Merge' button in the Play menu. It can then be used as a standard form filler to complete documents directly with the value of a variable, or to insert the variable itself into the document in order to create a macro to be merged with the data source later on.

In brief:
Task: Get more from newsgroups
Software I need: NewsBin 4.12
Difficulty: Extremely easy
Time I need: Around 15 minutes

Get more from newsgroups with NewsBin

GAIN ACCESS TO A WHOLE NEW COMMUNITY OF INFORMATION, IMAGES AND MULTIMEDIA WITH NEWSBIN'S EXCELLENT NNTP CLIENT

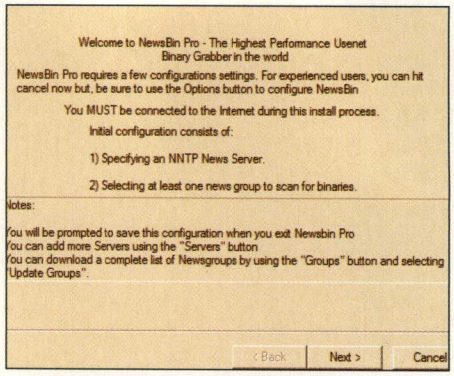
ACCORDING TO A good many reliable sources in the media, there is nothing like being a newsreader or anchorman to literally turn female viewers on. Such stalwarts as Michael Buerk, Huw Edwards and Trevor McDonald are allegedly all the subject of intense interest. It's fair to consider these News Groupies something of a phenomenon, but of course they should never be confused with newsgroups. If you survived that tenuous link, you'll be pleased to hear that it's the latter being covered here.

Newsgroups are probably one of the Internet's oldest pals, with a heritage for providing communication for scientific and military circles. Originally designed to carry simple text messages and now offering file distribution of many formats, its hierarchical subject groups carry thousands of postings from across the globe. This provides a forum for all kinds of topics that range from trainspotting to the downright kinky, and NewsBin is a newsreader client that has everything you need to get looking.

Running on the popular Usenet system, NewsBin's ease of use and performance has made it a firm favourite for those in the know. Its prominent position in this month's time-saving top 50 is proof, and that's why we've decided to give you a crash course. All the main pointers are covered, so if you've never used newsgroups before, don't worry. Installing the program is a real doddle, and we've tried to make successfully connecting to an NNTP server dead easy. You'll then get to explore the many topic groups available and begin downloading 'headers'. These basically itemise the many postings or binaries contained in a group, and NewsBin will let you regularly check for new updates.

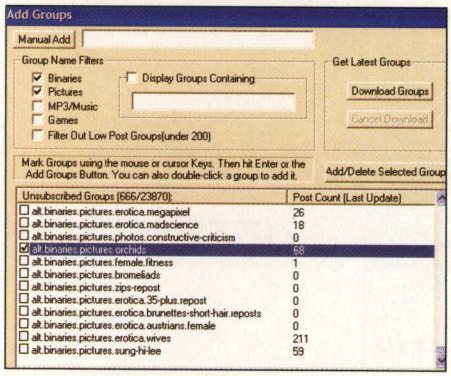
Lastly, we cover the many filter options that could prove to be particularly useful if you wish to restrict use. Limiting the types of file that can be downloaded will not only save time when receiving headers but can also block worrying content. Newsgroups are largely unsolicited, so do be aware that an 'underground' culture can provide a forum for offensive material.

You should also be aware that spamming can result in a UDP or 'Usenet Death Penalty' – a barring for ISPs and users – while a general ignorance of group subjects is also frowned upon.


Welcome to NewsBin Pro - The Highest Performance Usenet Binary Grabber in the world
NewsBin Pro requires a few configurations settings. For experienced users, you can hit cancel now but, be sure to use the Options button to configure NewsBin
You MUST be connected to the Internet during this install process.
Initial configuration consists of:
1) Specifying an NNTP News Server.
2) Selecting at least one news group to scan for binaries.
Notes:
You will be prompted to save this configuration when you exit Newsbin Pro
You can add more Servers using the "Servers" button
You can download a complete list of Newsgroups by using the "Groups" button and selecting 'Update Groups".
< Back
Next >
Cancel

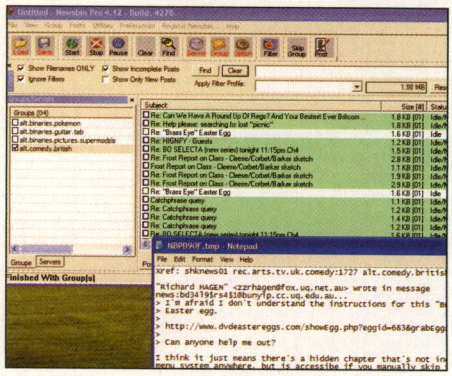
1 Install and configure

Once you've installed NewsBin you are prompted to follow a three-step configuration process. It asks for name, address, port settings and password data for connecting to a news server, but simply click 'Cancel' to jump to the main screen.



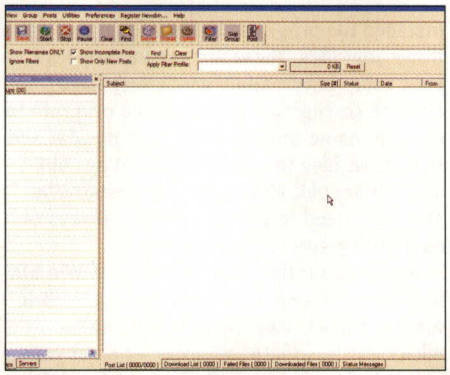
4 Add groups

Now you need to select the newsgroups on your server. Click the toolbar's 'Group' button to open 'Add Groups' and press 'Download Groups'. They can then be filtered with the options above and loaded by checking the tickboxes, before clicking 'OK'.



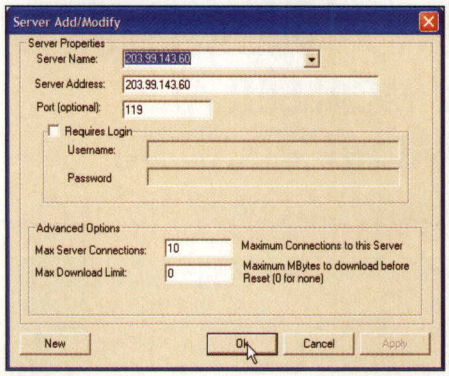
7 Posting power

Many of the headers are messages submitted about group topics. The subjects are listed like emails so that you'll know what to read. Simply click on a chosen header with the right button and select 'Read Post Body' on the menu to preview the text.



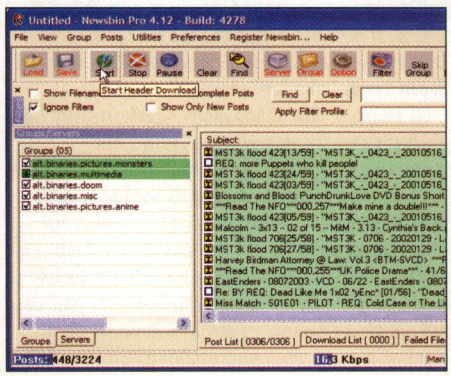
2 The interface explained

NewsBin's default interface consists of various windows. The panel on the left lists available servers and groups, with the panes at the bottom displaying previews of picture files. The large tabbed window holds the downloadable 'headers' and status messages.



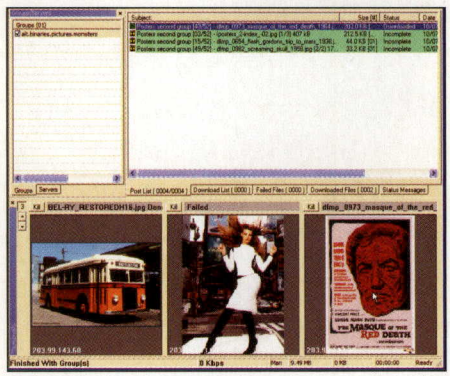
3 Add servers

You won't be able to do anything before you specify a valid news server. Hit 'Server' on the toolbar and you'll see the 'Server Add/Modify' dialog. Submit a name and enter a Web or IP address in the next box. Ignore the port or password fields unless required.



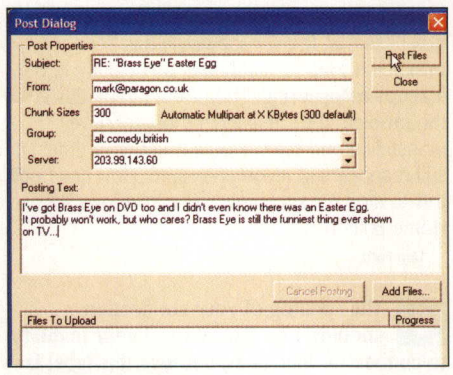
5 Here is the news

In the Groups panel, tick all the groups you want to scan, making sure the corresponding servers are also enabled. Click the 'Start' button on the toolbar to begin downloading headers for each group, and halt or pause the process with the additional buttons.



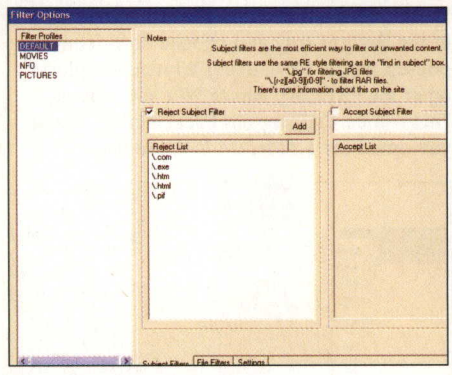
6 Graphical goodness

Many of the groups are devoted to sharing pictures which you can download and open in the 'Thumbnail' panel. Double-click the header containing the image and it should appear, with its icon turning green to signify success.



8 Join in

Clicking 'Post' opens a dialog to submit your own opinions on a subject. It's pretty much like sending an email – just enter a subject in the labelled box, giving your name or address and specifying a group. Enter your text and hit 'Post Files' to launch.



9 Setting filters

Newsgroup content can be filtered to speed header downloads or weed out unsuitable postings. Preset profiles are included, with facilities to create your own, and used to isolate file types or subjects. Hit 'Preferences', 'Filter Options' to start censoring.

Power users' tip

POSSIBLY THE FIRST problem you'll encounter with NewsBin would ordinarily be a critical one. You'll already know that using the program to access newsgroups is impossible without a server address, so where do you get one? This caused untold confusion in the *PI* office, particularly when the software advised using a server provided by your ISP. However, when the head-scratching ceased we calmly turned to searching the Net for a solution. Fortunately we unearthed a site called 'Newzbot'. There are actually many domains of this ilk, and they provide a searchable database of totally free news servers. You can find ones that carry a certain group, view lists ordered by speed and user rating, and even suggest your own. With the necessary addresses included, there's all you need to get NewsBin connected in no time.

Jargon buster

NNTP

The NNTP acronym stands for 'Network News Transfer Protocol' and enables the main Usenet services to work. As the replacement for the original standard, UUCP (Unix-to-Unix Copy Protocol), it facilitates the distribution, retrieval, querying and posting of news articles.

Usenet

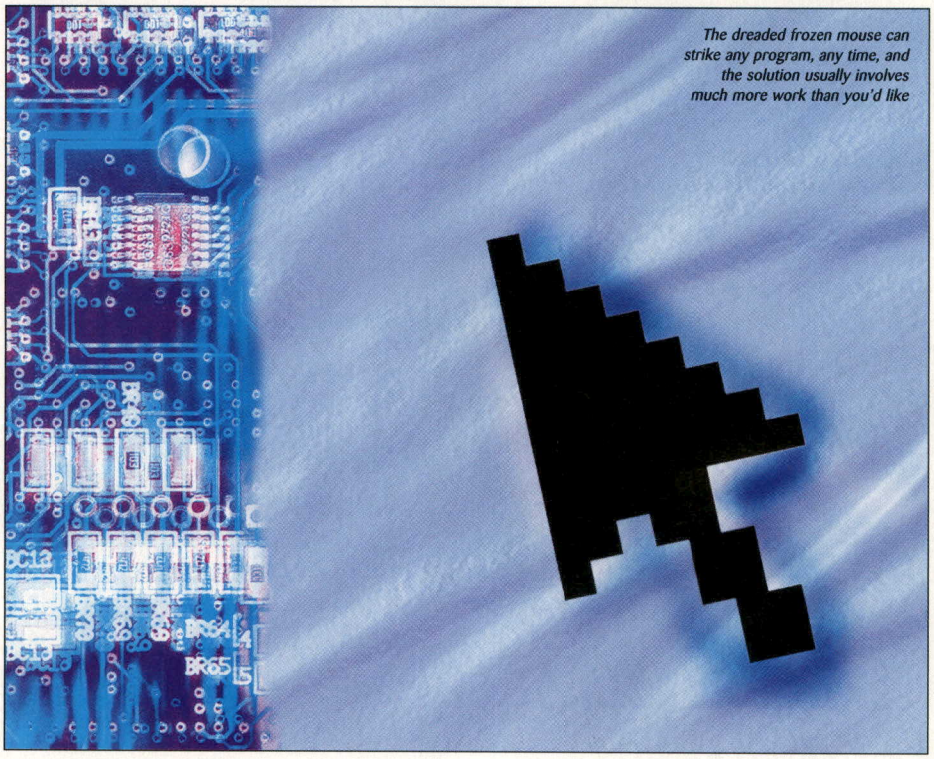
This is a worldwide Bulletin Board System (BBS) that is accessible via the Net. Started in 1979 at Duke University, it has grown to international proportions and encompasses over 14,000 newsgroups. Many believe it to be the largest decentralised information exchange service ever, and although some groups can be moderated, it remains largely as a forum for free speech and thought.

Binaries

A 'binary' refers to any downloadable file that is not purely text based. This would normally be multimedia files such as pictures, audio, movies and executables like actual programs. Many newsgroups will have dedicated categories for archiving binaries, and therefore a text posting announcing the availability of such a file will be located separately. A newsreader such as NewsBin is required to not only download binaries, but also decode them.

Q&A
Web browsing

GOT CONNECTION PROBLEMS? EMAIL **DANNY MCALEER** AT **HELPDESK@PARAGON.CO.UK**. HE'LL CURE YOUR BROWSING ILLS



The dreaded frozen mouse can strike any program, any time, and the solution usually involves much more work than you'd like

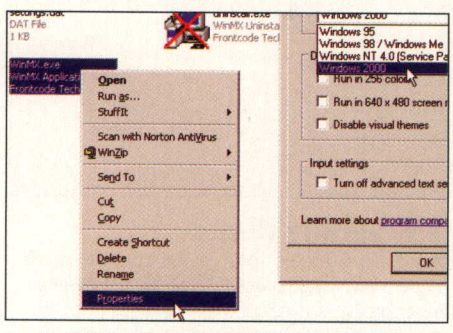
Freezing Win MX

Q I used to have Win MX on my computer, then I had a PC crash and lost it. I've since found Win MX again on the Net and reinstalled it, but something's wrong. The program freezes and the mouse pointer will not move. I have to try and fiddle with it to move it and close down the program. I'm using Windows XP with 120Mb. Please can you help me?

Moira Smith

A **There could be many reasons for this kind of behaviour, but let's start off with the program itself, since some folks on the Win MX newsgroups have had similar problems. Sundry solutions have been offered, and one of these may work for you. Given that you've only just reinstalled the software it's likely that you have the most up-to-date version (3.31), but it's worth checking. If it isn't, shut down Win MX and use the 'Add/Remove Programs' Control Panel to completely remove it from your computer (traces of older versions have been known to cause problems when you install a new version). Then go to www.winmx.com/download and download a new version. See if this solves your problem.**

If you have the latest version, make sure it is completely shut down before you proceed. To do this, right click on the 'MX' circle icon in the System Tray and choose 'Exit' from the pop-up menu. Now, using Windows Explorer open the directory where Win MX is living. This will be C:\Program Files\WinMX unless you opted for a different location when you installed the program. In here you'll find three *.dat files. These are used to store all your setup information, which may have become corrupted and caused the program to hang. Rename the colors.dat, settings.dat and library.dat files to 'colors.old', 'settings.old' and 'library.old'. Now when you restart Win MX you'll need to go through the process of configuring your settings again.



Running Win MX in Compatibility mode under Windows XP can sometimes stop the program from unexpectedly crashing

Another possible solution is to run Win MX in Compatibility mode. To do this, right-click on the 'WinMX' icon on your desktop (or wherever the link to the program is on your computer) and choose 'Properties' from the pop-up menu. Click on the 'Compatibility' tab in the dialog box and tick the box labelled 'Run this program in Compatibility mode for:'. In the pull-down menu below select the 'Windows 2000' option and press 'OK'. Restart Win MX.

In some situations, Win MX can conflict with spyware installed on your computer. To check if you have any of this pernicious software, try running AdAware (download it from www.lsfileserv.com).

If none of these solutions work, it may be that it's not the program at fault, but something on your computer. Faulty memory will cause programs to crash in this way. If this happens with other programs on your PC, this is likely to be the case. As a last resort though, there are other easier to use peer-to-peer file-sharing applications you can try, such as KaZaA (www.kazaa.com) or AudioGalaxy (www.audiogalaxy.com).

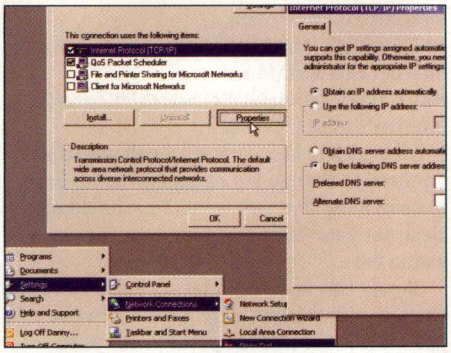
Superhighway hard shoulder

Q I bought a broadband connection from Metronet, but I cannot get online. A window appears with the message 'RasDial failed error 678', followed by another saying 'Cannot connect to remote computer'.
When I open the connection's Properties dialog box I see that the service name has been misspelt. I tried to rectify this by deleting it, but it keeps reappearing. Therefore, I think this is the problem, because even though I have uninstalled and reinstalled a number of times, it still reappears in its original state. How can I edit this to stop it happening? I use Windows XP Home Edition.

Dan Ford

A **The spelling of your connection shouldn't be the cause of your inability to connect to Metronet, because this label is merely to make it easier for users to identify or differentiate between their Dial-Up Networking accounts. You could call it 'banana' and it should still work.**

However, it is worth checking that all the other details are correct. An error 678 in



Make sure you're calling the right number for your ISP. Mrs Bishop's chip shop serves a lovely cod, but it doesn't do so well with its ADSL service

Dial-Up Networking terms usually indicates an incorrect number, which in turn prevents the modem picking up the phone. It might be the phone number you use to dial, or it might be that the TCP/IP address is set up incorrectly. Open your Metronet connection from the 'Settings', 'Network Connections' Start menu. In the 'General' section, make sure that the dial-up number is correct for your type of account. If you have a static IP address account, you need 0845 6389302; for a dynamic IP (which, unless you've specifically asked for a static IP, is likely to be the case) you need 0845 6389304. Next, click on the 'Networking' tab and select 'Internet Protocol (TCP/IP)'. Press the 'Properties...' button. Check in this dialog to see if the option to 'Specify name server addresses' is chosen. If not, select it and then enter the following IP addresses into the Primary and Secondary DNS fields: 213.162.97.253 and 213.162.97.66.

If all of this seems to be correct and you are certain there are no other software problems (try completely uninstalling and reinstalling your ADSL dial-up software if you have some), and you still cannot connect, you may have hardware problems to resolve. It may be that you haven't set up your modem properly, or don't have the right ADSL filters fitted to your phone line. Of course, this only applies if you bought a self-install package (which we're assuming you did). Try rebooting your computer, and switching off your modem or router for at least ten minutes before attempting to connect again. Another test you can perform before resorting to Metronet's technical support is to connect using the username bt_test@startup_domain with no password. If you can connect, you can strike your hardware from the list of possible faults. Armed with this information, and your username and phone number, your next course of action is to phone Metronet's technical support. Your account may not be set up properly, or there might be other important settings to configure. Since you pay for this service, you can expect a decent response. Call them on 087 0284 0284 or 020 8423 7909 or send an email to support@metronet.co.uk.

Locked out of Windows

Q I have three Operating Systems on my computer: Solaris 8, Windows 2000 and Windows 98. Unfortunately, I cannot access Windows 2000 any more because I have accidentally corrupted the password file by typing too quickly on login. How do I repair it? Will reinstalling Windows 2000 affect the Solaris 8 installation?

Awes Sayed

A **Assuming that you are the computer's administrator (as you would be on a standalone machine), it's very unlikely that** →

Downloading Flash movies

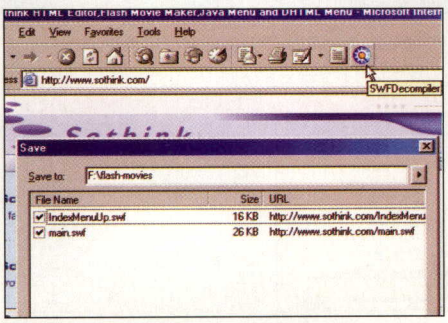
Q Is there an easy way to download Flash movies onto my computer? I want to save some of the games I've found so that I can play them offline, but I can't always find the right file in the Temporary Internet Files folder. Sometimes it seems that the Flash movie never even gets cached. Is there a tool I can download that will do this for me?

Ian Stanley

A **Wouldn't it be lovely if you could just right-click as you do with pictures and choose 'Save As...' from the pop-up menu? Alas, this isn't possible. And you're right: rummaging around in the Temporary Internet Files folder doesn't always yield expected results, even when you've just previously emptied the cache and listed all the items in order of type.**

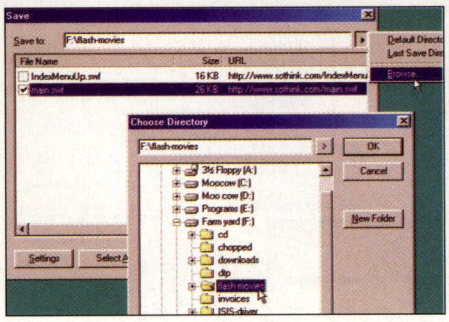
However, there are a number of Flash movie decompilers that will do just the job. One of these is Sothink's SWF Decompiler MX 2002 Pro. You can download a free trial version from www.sothink.com/flashdecompiler/download.htm. This program enables you to browse, view and even extract elements from SWF files (as long as they are not copy protected). SWF Decompiler also features a plug-in for Internet Explorer as well as a standalone utility, which adds a new button to the main toolbar – something that might be more applicable to your needs. This button enables you to copy the movie from the current Web page onto your computer.

Follow our simple three-step guide below to find out how to do this – and you'll also discover what to do in the case of a Web site that's constructed of frames.



1 Find your movie

Load the Web page where the Flash movie is located into Internet Explorer. When it's finished loading, click on the 'SWF Decompiler' button in the main button bar. A Save dialog box will appear listing all the Flash movies present in that page.



2 Saving the movie

Tick the boxes for the Flash movies you want to save, press the 'Arrow' button next to the Save To box and hit 'Browse'. Use the 'File Selector' to pick the directory where you want your Flash movie saved. Hit 'OK', then 'OK' again in the previous dialog box.

3 Frame-based Web sites

If the Web site is constructed of frames, saving an SWF is a little different. Instead of pushing the button in the main toolbar, right-click the frame that contains the movie and choose 'Sothink SWF Decompiler' instead. Then continue as per step two.

→ **you'll be able to gain access to your Windows 2000 Operating System by 'fixing' the password. There is no method in the Windows 2000 security model to bypass, disable or reset the password. Therefore, reinstalling Windows 2000 is really your only course of action. If you installed all three OS on different logical drives (which is always the best way to do it), it shouldn't affect your Solaris installation. If this isn't the case, or you also want to retain the data files on the Windows 2000 hard drive, when you reinstall the Operating System you should avoid reformatting. Unfortunately, you will still have to reinstall all your applications and drivers.**

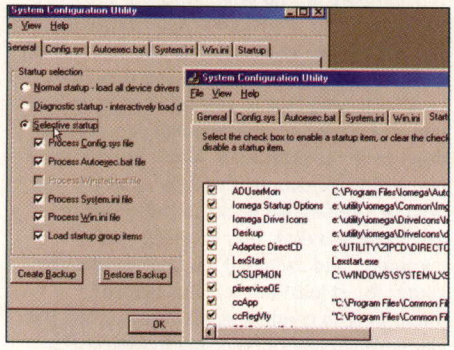
Q That's not my home page

I cannot change my home page in Internet Explorer. I have tried going to the Internet Options and changing it that way, but every time I restart it changes back to a Web site that, as far as I can remember, I never even visited or bookmarked, let alone made the default home page. It's really frustrating. Can it be changed? I use Internet Explorer 6 with Windows 98.

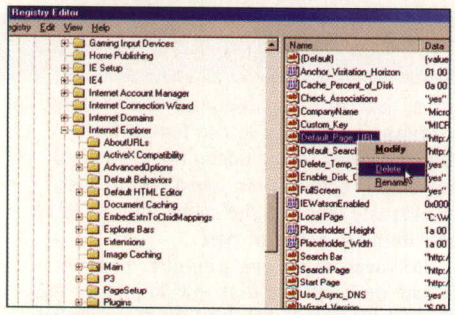
Joss Corben

A There are several possible causes for this kind of irritating behaviour, one of which is a virus or worm. So, before you go ahead and try any of the solutions below, run a complete virus scan on your computer. However, don't panic. There is a far greater likelihood that your home page has been changed by a Web browser enhancement or some other software you installed, or an ISP installation.

The first thing to do is eradicate any spurious entries from the Registry. Click on 'Start', choose 'Run...', and in the prompt type 'regedit' and press 'OK'. Locate the following key: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Control Panel. If you see a ResetWebSettings or HomePage value in the right-hand pane, right-click on each in turn and remove them by choosing 'Delete' from the pop-up menu. Next, you'll need to check the following keys for any instances of either Default_Page_URL or Start Page values: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main HKEY_USERS\Default\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main.



Isolating a problem with your system is much easier when you can control what's loaded at startup



If Internet Explorer's home page keeps changing, use the Registry Editor to remove any references to it

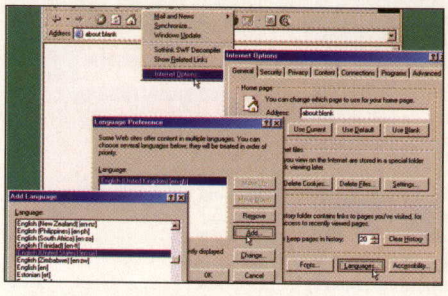
However, it's more likely to be a startup program, so click on the 'Startup' tab in the System Configuration Utility. Scroll through the list of applications and clear the checkboxes next to the entries you suspect

Searching for Internet Explorer's Search options

Q How do you add new search engines to Internet Explorer's Search bar? I've seen in Netscape 7 that it has Google and Lycos. Can you do this with Internet Explorer? At the moment, it only has MSN in the Search tools and I can't add any new ones when I press 'Customise'.

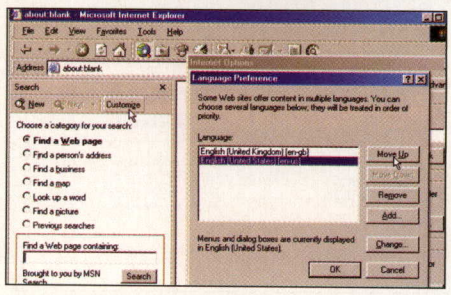
Jayne Rowlands

A Bizarrely, this anomaly where only MSN is available in the Search bar is actually to do with Internet Explorer's language settings, and not with any configuration of the Search option. What you need to do is change your language settings to US English, and all the options will suddenly reappear...



1 Manage your languages

Click on 'Tools' and choose 'Internet Options'. Open the 'General' tab and click on the 'Languages' button. If 'English (United States)' is not included in the Languages Preferences dialog box, press 'Add' and use the subsequent dialog to add it.



2 Multiple options restored

Make sure 'US English' is at the top of the list by selecting it and pressing 'Move Up'. Click 'OK' and close the 'Internet Options' dialog box. Now when you open the Search bar you should see a whole load of new options. Press the 'Customise' button.

may be causing the problem. While you're doing all of this, limit your changes to one per reboot (it makes it easier to isolate the problem), and make a note of what you're doing on a piece of paper, so you can revert to your previous settings if things go a wee bit pear-shaped.

Q Need new codecs

When I tried to play some music and videos that I'd downloaded, Media Player kept trying to connect to the Net. Eventually I thought I should connect because I guessed it might need an update or something, but instead all I got was an error message saying: 'Cannot play back the video stream: no suitable decompressor can be found'. I thought Media Player could play AVI and MPEG files, so what's wrong with my version? Have I downloaded corrupted videos and music?

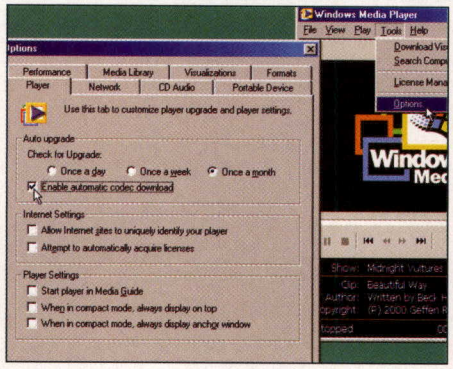
Lisa Fielding

A This error message is what Microsoft calls a 'feature', although it's not very helpful at all. A decompressor, or codec, is an algorithm that plugs into Media Player and allows it to play video or audio that's compressed using a certain technique. Perhaps somewhat frustratingly, there are many different types of audio and video compression, and often codecs needed to play them are either not included in the default installation or not supported at all by Media Player.

You don't say which version of Windows you're using, but if you're running version 95 or 98 you should upgrade Media Player to 7.1 (any later versions won't work on your OS); Windows XP users should have version 9. Upgrading might automatically furnish you with the necessary codecs for you to play the files.

Media Player requires Internet Explorer to be installed and functioning (although it does not have to be the default browser) for the codec download feature to work. Therefore, if it's a case of Media Player not being able to download a decompressor, open 'Internet Options' from the Control Panel and ensure that the Security level is set to 'Medium' or lower (you can always flip it back up afterwards).

Also, you'll need to check that you are allowing Media Player to download codecs as necessary. To do this, click on the 'Tools' menu and choose 'Options'. Select the 'Player' tab and ensure the box labelled 'Enable automatic codec download' is ticked. Also, if you have a firewall installed on your PC, make sure it allows Media Player to connect to the Net. A package of codecs for Media Player 7.0 is available from the Microsoft Web site at www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/format/codecdownload.aspx. On this site you'll also find a list of all the supported media compression formats. If, after all of this you still cannot play your video, you'll have to check the origin of the files to see which codec was used to compress the video, and find out if there's one available to download from the manufacturer's Web site.



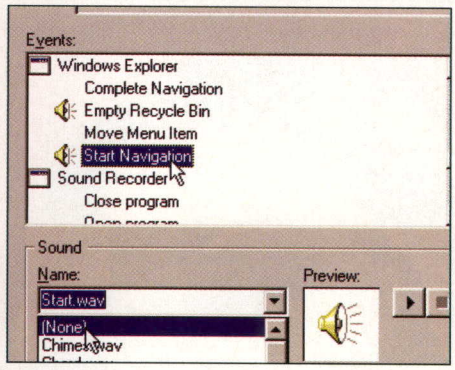
If your Media Player can't download new codecs, first of all make sure you haven't disabled the option in the program's settings

Clicks ruining recordings

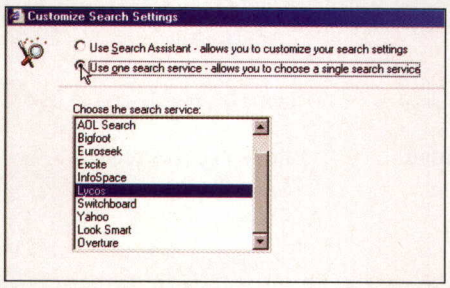
Q I'm trying to record radio off the Internet, but it's constantly spoilt by that stupid clicking sound that IE insists on playing each time you click on a link. I looked all around IE's options, but can't find anything. Can you switch it off, or am I stuck with it?

Ian Hynes

A Switching off or changing the click noise isn't as obvious as it should be. You'll find it in the Sounds Control Panel, not in any of Internet Explorer's options. Open this and scroll down the list of 'Events' until you reach the deceptively named 'Windows Explorer' section. Select the 'Start Navigation' event under this and change the equally deceptively named 'start.wav' to 'None' in the Name pop-up menu below.

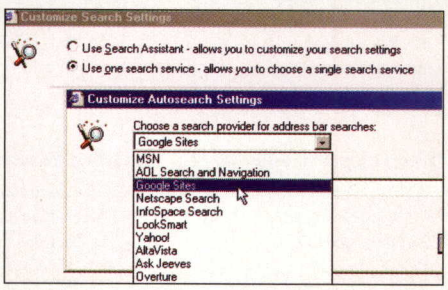


Recording audio from the Internet? Then switch off the stupid navigation clicks...



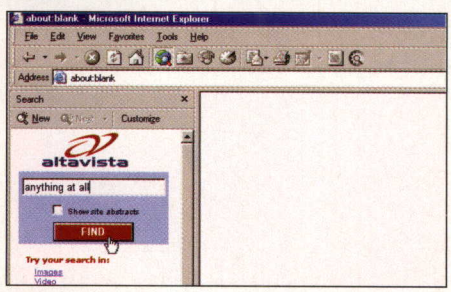
3 Search for a search engine

In the Customise Search Settings dialog box, choose the 'Use one search service' option and pick the search engine you want for the side bar from the now extended list below. Click on 'Autosearch Settings' to change the engine for the Address bar.



4 Pick an Autosearch engine

In the top pull-down menu pick your preferred search engine. Ensure that 'Just display results in the main window' is selected in the menu below and hit 'OK'. Close the 'Customise Search' window and IE will update the side bar with your new search.



5 Using your search tools

Enter your search phrase in the box supplied to begin looking through your newly selected engine. To look for something in the search engine you chose for the Autosearch settings, enter a phrase into the browser's Address bar and press 'Return'.

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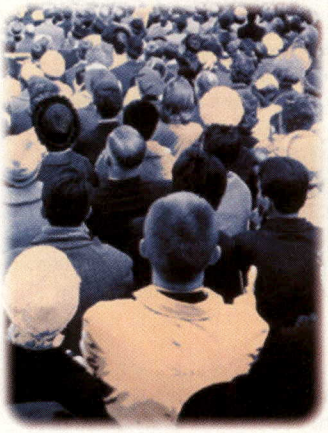

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Your Business Online

EXPERT ADVICE ON CREATING PROFITABLE SMALL BUSINESSES

Welcome...

HOW MANY TIMES have you come into work and spent half an hour reading emails from people within shouting distance of your desk? Let's face it, we all have, and this is increasingly becoming seen as part of office life. As our lead news story states, in fact, companies are now wasting billions of pounds every year on the time we all spend checking our mail. Honestly, it's enough to make you stop using your email – well, maybe not!

Thomas Watson, Editor
thomas@paragon.co.uk

Contents

93 Your Business Online
All the latest business news, including an astonishing report that says we're all being paid £10,000 too much

95 Q&A
Gerard Liston turns his attention to Web site usability in this month's dose of business advice

96 How did they do that?
We get the lowdown on how WH Smith has transferred its high street success to online accolades

98 Trading abroad
Hal Devlin supplies advice and warning for anyone hoping to sell their wares in foreign climes

102 Get listed on search engines
Tired of missing out on top Google rankings? Get ready to be happy then

104 Web hosting listings
Pick the hosting provider that's perfect for you with the help of our comprehensive listings guide

107 4D Business Kit competition
Win yourself one of four amazing business starter kits in our easy to enter competition with 4D

Employees often have to wade through 30 or 40 emails before they can get to their real work

Businesses count the cost of email

NEW SURVEY PROVES THAT IT'S NOT JUST SPAM WHICH IS WASTING SO MANY COMPANIES' TIME AND MONEY

UK BUSINESSES ARE wasting massive amounts of time and money on unnecessary emails.

According to a survey of senior staff by business-writing consultants Emphasis, office workers are spending too much time sending emails when they would be better dealing with things face to face.

The report reveals that British firms are, on average, forking out a staggering £10,000 per person per year, paying employees to read and write unnecessary emails.

"The immediacy of email is both its blessing and its curse," said Robert Ashton, senior consultant at Emphasis.

"It's made it possible for people to communicate badly in great volume. People often have to wade through 30 or 40 emails before they can begin their 'real work'."

According to Ashton, part of the problem can be attributed to the fact that people have difficulty composing coherent messages, resulting in waffly emails that can infuriate the recipient. Another Emphasis survey shows that 20 percent of emails are considered badly written or difficult to read.

Ashton added: "Many people use ten words when they could use three."

"THE IMMEDIACY OF EMAIL IS BOTH ITS BLESSING AND ITS CURSE" ROBERT ASHTON

The cost of email to businesses is being stretched further by the growing problem of junk mail which, according to the European Commission, stung European companies for an estimated £1.5 billion in lost productivity last year.

This figure was given by European Commissioner Erkki Liikanen after he appealed for international co-operation in the fight to block spam. The EU is hoping that new legislation banning unwanted email, due to come into force in November, will ease the problem, but because of the global nature of junk email many feel that it won't have too much of an effect.

According to Liikanen, between a third and a half of all emails sent and received are now spam, and with most junk mail originating in the United States and China, businesses are likely to be paying the price for some years to come.

"Combating spam has become a matter for us all, and is one of the most significant issues facing the Internet today," said Liikanen.

"The EU, Member States, industry and consumers all have a role to play in the fight against spam both at the national and international level."

News in brief

Microsoft cash boost

Just when Bill Gates was thinking he might need to take on a part time job, Microsoft announces that its net profit has jumped 26 percent. Despite a cautious outlook for modest growth in PC sales and weak technology spending, the software giant has now raised its revenue forecast for the fiscal year ending June 2004 by around $1 billion (£662 billion), to between $34.2 billion (£21 billion) and $34.9 billion (£21.5 billion) – which should keep poor old Bill in clean underwear for a while.

Rivals gets a result

Though we'll have to wait a few months to find out who'll be crowned Premiership champions, Rivals Digital Media is already celebrating after being confirmed as Britain's largest online sports network. The company, behind sites such as Football365, Planet Rugby and Rivals.net, has announced the results of its second annual ABC Electronic audit, which saw Rivals' network of sites receive over two million unique users for the month of March.

No expense spared

Fed up with doing your expenses? That could change, thanks to the launch of ExpenseWorld, a mobile automated expenses application for the .NET framework. The program allows users to capture, manage and integrate expenses via any medium such as a mobile phone, laptop, PDA or Smart Phone, meaning that you can submit your expenses claim as soon as you've made your purchase. For more details visit **www.expenseworld.net**.

Heavenly host

Verio (www.verio.co.uk) has launched a new business partner program in Europe in a bid to increase revenue opportunities for solution providers and traditional IT resellers, focused on enterprise customers. The scheme will give partners the chance to offer Verio's complete application infrastructure-hosting platform, PowerPlatform. As well as promising experienced sales support staff, the program serves up market development funds to qualified partners and lucrative recurring commissions for solution providers.

SMS messaging is used to inform stockbrokers about trading activity

Firms experience the joy of text

COMPANIES TURN TO SMS MESSAGING TO REPLACE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

BRITISH FIRMS ARE making increased use of text messaging in order to communicate with their employees, partners and customers.

That's the verdict of a new survey which reveals that more businesses are turning this traditionally consumer-oriented technology to their advantage. The study of 20 of Britain's leading companies and industry analysts by Topcall shows that SMS messaging has begun overtaking older, more established modes of communication such as pagers.

According to the report, the most popular use for corporate text messaging is to alert mobile technicians to system errors. The technology is also being used to notify executives of urgent voice mails, warn business travellers of delays and inform stockbrokers about trading activity.

Topcall points out that text messaging is an efficient way of sending time-specific alerts, and notes that more businesses intend to expand its use into areas such as sending medical data or informing customers of shipping delays.

As businesses wise up to the advantages of text messaging, The Mobile Data Association estimates that 14 percent of mobile phone users send work-related messages from their handsets, amounting to 20 billion texts this year.

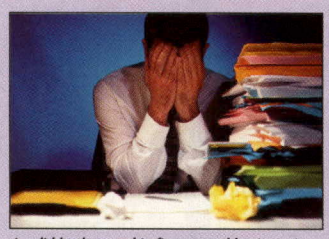
Philip Redman, vice president of research at Gartner, said: "Some large organisations are looking to replace existing paging networks with SMS services because of the availability, flexibility of use and existing devices supporting these services."

IT WORKERS HIT CAREER CEILING

BAD NEWS FOR TECHIES WHO ARE AIMING FOR THE TOP

HIGH-FLYING IT professionals who yearn to make it to the very top of their firm may have a long wait, according to a new study.

Not a single CEO in the UK's top 100 blue chip companies has come from an IT background, says head-hunting firm Hanover Fox. The report reveals that this situation is unlikely to change in the near future, pointing out that a solid financial and business background is vital for any IT worker gunning for the top.



A solid background in finance and business is essential for any IT worker aiming for the top

Hanover Fox's Elisabeth Marx, who conducted the research, told Silicon.com: "It's important they get very good financial grounding early in their career, and they need to be quite careful in choosing relatively high-profile positions."

The study also highlighted the growing trend towards new young 'super CEOs', revealing that there are double the number of people under 45 at the head of UK boards compared to figures from 1996.

Your Business Online Q&A

EVERY ISSUE, OUR RESIDENT EXPERT, **GERARD LISTON** FROM SMALLBIZ UK, ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS. CONTACT GERARD BY EMAILING **PI@PARAGON.CO.UK** OR VISITING THE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE WEB SITE AT **WWW.YBOANSWERS.CO.UK**

THIS MONTH, WE LOOK AT A SERIES OF QUESTIONS ON SITE USABILITY. RESPONSES WERE PROVIDED BY SITE-REPORT.COM – A PARTNER ORGANISATION AND EXPERT IN WEB SITE USABILITY

Q How can I ensure that my Web site is as easy to use as possible?

Hannah Griffiths

A **No matter how usable you think your Web site is, there will be visitors who have difficulty navigating and finding their way around your site.**

Firstly, it's very important that you adopt standard workflow conventions that will enable your visitors to easily understand how to use your site. Ensure that the design is both simple and consistent. An over-complicated, clunky site will result in visitors who won't stay long and definitely won't return. You should also ensure that they are able to easily navigate around the site, know where they are and be only one click away from the home page.

Secondly, do not assume that all visitors have the same skills and experience as you do when surfing the Web. Many don't. You should always test a site's usability with a selection of volunteers prior to going live. These volunteers should have a range of Internet experience. Set your usability testers a challenge – for example, ordering a product from your site – and get them to provide feedback on how easy or difficult it was to complete.

Thirdly, use hit-tracking software to analyse how your visitors are using your Web site. From analysing these logs, you will be able to establish the navigation paths used by your visitors – and also establish navigation bottlenecks, where your visitors are participating in a workflow transaction and then simply give up due to a usability problem.

Q How important is it to provide email feedback to visitor actions, such as registration and order placement?

Paul Edwards

A **Humans need feedback in various aspects of life, and this is just as true of the Internet. As there is no face-to-face contact in an Internet transaction, it's vital that you give your visitors instant feedback, especially if they are purchasing from your site.**

If your Web site requires registration, ensure that you provide instant feedback via the site, and email them to tell them the registration has been successful. This gives your visitors the feeling that they're important. It also means they won't forget about your site in a hurry.

Make sure that if a visitor purchases from your eCommerce site they receive instant confirmation of their order. This confirmation should include full details of their purchase including delivery date, and have links to enable them to track or cancel their order. If you promise a delivery date for shipping of their order, ensure that you can meet it and if for some reason you can't, let them know as soon as possible, giving them the option to cancel.

Many companies forget that feedback is a vital element in the usability of their Web sites.

Q When optimising my Web site for search engine placement, it seems to be less usable. Which is more important?

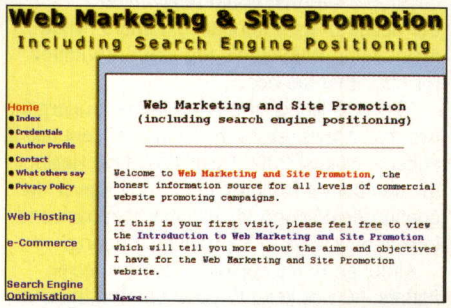
Nick Martyn

A **Search engine placement within the major search engines is a vital means of promoting your Web site. However, unless your site is well-designed and usable, the visitors who find it due to its top ten ranking will soon leave again and choose a lower-ranking but more usable site. You need to ensure that your Web site can be found easily by your visitors and that it's easy to use when they do find it.**

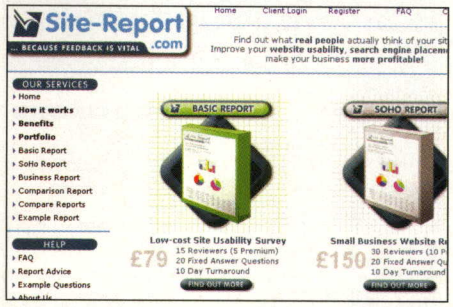
Optimising pages for search engine placement does not imply that your site is usable. It simply means that search engine spiders have been able to easily index your site.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and usability-design must both be addressed together in any Web site development, and it may be necessary to compromise on SEO in order to make your site more usable.

*Pop along to Hitslink (**www.hitslink.com**) to find out what your visitors are up to*


Web Marketing & Site Promotion
Including Search Engine Positioning
Web Marketing and Site Promotion
(including search engine positioning)

*Learn how to promote your site properly by visiting **www.webmarketingplus.co.uk***



Site-Report is an expert in Web usability and provided the answers to this issue's questions

Your Business Online

How did they do that?

How we built WHSmith.co.uk

AS ONE OF THE MOST RECOGNISABLE NAMES ON THE HIGH STREET, HOW DOES A COMPANY LIKE WHSMITH GO ABOUT TRANSLATING ITS BUSINESS TO THE INTERNET? **JAMES THORNTON** FINDS OUT

Trundle down the main street of virtually any town in the UK and there are two things you're almost guaranteed to run into – a cider-sodden tramp and a branch of WHSmith.

The newsagent giant now has a presence in virtually every corner of the UK and is expanding its product offering by the day. Besides flogging newspapers, books and magazines, Smiths has recently been branching out into the world of home entertainment, becoming one of the nation's favourite places to pick up the latest CDs, DVDs and video games.

Just as the company has been entering these markets, we've seen an increase in the number of bargain basement Web sites offering literature, audio and video at knock-down prices, which you think would be somewhat troubling to a company that has dominated the high street market for such a long time. Perhaps understandably, WHSmith was keen to compete on an even playing field with emerging online stores such as Amazon, Play.com and CD-WOW, and its acquisition of independent site The Internet Bookshop in 1998 paved the way for WHSmith.co.uk.

Sections like the 'Need Help?' area allow people to get the most from the WHSmith Web site quickly and easily

Setting up

The company brought in a specialist team to create the Web site, and help was garnered from the entire company to help the team develop a site that could really meet the needs of its potential customers, while maintaining WHSmith's top-class reputation for customer service.

"Since its launch the Web site has undergone two major revisions, with the most recent taking effect in August 2003," explains Steve Heald, the company's Trading Director. "However, we continually respond to customer feedback and look at new ways to improve the offering."

Although Heald couldn't release specific figures, he was keen to point out that the site has become increasingly successful, and it now registers hundreds of thousands of visitors every week. The huge scale of the WHSmith enterprise has meant that the site is able to offer pretty much everything you can buy in a store, and products are broken up into different categories on the site's main navigation bar. The sections include books, music, DVD, video and games, which have all proved immensely popular with the punters. "Books are the established favourite and the popularity of DVDs is growing very fast," enthuses Heald. "In addition, our stationery and magazine sections are becoming increasingly popular with our customers."

Though WHSmith.co.uk is able to offer a gargantuan range of books, CDs and DVDs at

DVDs are now a major money-spinner for WHSmith's online arm – with special offers designed to get you to part with your cash

WHSmith.co.uk

Books made WHSmith a huge success story, and the company's Web site now lets you buy the paper stuff online

Tune in to WHSmith.co.uk, where you can now purchase your favourite monthly magazine titles online

Customer feedback has been central to the development of WHSmith.co.uk, with visitors urged to express their opinions

a reasonable price, it's been unable to compete with the likes of Amazon and CD-WOW in the price stakes. Heald explains that the company has been able to overcome this obstacle due to the sheer size of the WHSmith brand, adding: "Being part of a nationally recognised retail chain provides our customers with a range of services that set us apart from other online retailers."

The site has really blossomed thanks to crossovers with the high street, allowing customers to enjoy the kind of features and services they'd expect from their local store, and helping the company to drive sales through loyalty schemes.

Heald adds: "Customers can collect Clubcard points on their purchases and we often run special promotions to earn double points on online services. They can also choose from the multitude of own label products and exclusive ranges available through the high street stores."

Delivery options

One of the concerns that blights most online retail outlets is the fact that most customers are wary of forking out for delivery charges after parting with their hard-earned pounds on a product. A recent Forrester survey revealed that 40 per cent of people who look to shop online are put off by shipping charges. With this in mind and to compete with stores offering free delivery, WHSmith.co.uk has introduced a new service which allows customers to have their purchases sent to their local high street store at no charge.

"Recent research showed that customers are often frustrated by having to collect parcels from local post depots if they weren't around when they were delivered," Heald explains. "We therefore ran a small trial to ascertain response levels to a delivery to store service. The trial proved extremely popular, so it was decided to roll the programme out to the whole of the UK. We are even attracting new customers through it."

Besides its online system, the company also operates a telephone ordering service, which gives people an extra method of calling in their desired products.

> **"WE CONTINUALLY RESPOND TO CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND LOOK AT WAYS OF IMPROVING"** STEVE HEALD

Heald reveals: "By constantly listening to our customers, we became aware of the demand for customers to be able to order via other means. Many of them don't have regular access to the Internet, so we want to make sure we offer them a variety of services."

It seems that many of the unique services on the WHSmith site have come about through the company listening to its customers' needs, and Heald stresses that the online suggestion scheme has been a driving force behind the site, helping to launch features such as the delivery to store service and the incredibly informative 'Need Help?' section.

Pushing forward

Of course, all the customer feedback in the world isn't going to bring you success if you leave your business in the hands of a gaggle of chimpanzees, and Heald is quick to big up his team, highlighting the importance of having a solid staff working together to bring your online dreams to life.

"The team behind the Web site are the ones who make it so customer focused," he concludes. "Without the customer service, logistics, support and front office teams we wouldn't be able to deliver the level of service expected by our customers."

Despite the size of the company, WHSmith has, somewhat incredibly, always managed to maintain a reputation as a friendly, sharing, caring kind of store to rival that of the newsagent around the corner. By sticking to this commitment to customer service, the firm has translated its success in the 'real' world to the Web, and has proved that the principles and rules of business are just as relevant online as they are on the high street.

As for the future of WHSmith, Heald is optimistic that the site can continue to make headway online, concluding: "We will continue to focus on what our customers want from WHSmith, as the more we can understand what they want and deliver this, the more we'll be able to operate a successful Web site." ■

Site stats

WHSmith.co.uk
www.whsmith.co.uk

- **Who designed it?**
  In-house
- **Software used?**
  The site works with partners such as Microsoft and Dell, though many of the systems are produced internally
- **Number of weekly visitors?**
  "Hundred of thousands"
- **Partnership schemes?**
  The company works with **www.tradedoubler.com**, which enables it to increase awareness of the site
- **Number of stores?**
  553
- **Total number of WHS employees?**
  19,693
- **Total UK retail sales?**
  £1.5bn

TIME SCALE

- **August 1792** — Henry Walton Smith and his wife Anna open a small news vendors in Little Grosvenor Street, London
- **September 1816** — The couple's son William Henry Smith inherits the business, and the name WHSmith is born
- **March 1903** — The first overseas branch is opened in Paris
- **April 1998** — WHSmith acquires online bookshop The Internet Bookstore
- **July 2003** — The site launches its free delivery to store service
- **August 2003** — The site is redesigned for the second time

Trading abroad

THE INTERNET MAKES IT EASIER THAN EVER TO SELL GOODS AND SERVICES TO FOREIGN MARKETS. **HAL DEVLIN** GIVES YOU SOME POINTERS ON TAKING YOUR BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

Many small to medium businesses restrict their vision to the UK. That's fine if you can turn a profit within this market – but the Net can offer much wider benefits. The Web is a global medium, giving you access to a whole world of customers. This reason alone may be enough to persuade you to take the plunge, but there are other benefits too.

Foreign markets may not have ready access to the goods you want to sell, and what may be easy to get hold of over here may be gold dust over there. In other circumstances, market rates may enable you to undercut local prices while still turning a profit. Ultimately, you're the expert in your area of sales – and if you're already selling goods in the UK, trading abroad through the Web offers you a chance to expand your business without having to build new outlets from bricks and mortar.

Although selling to foreign markets using the Web is far cheaper than setting up shop in Paris or New York, you still have to deal with international trade regulations. This is no simple task and though we'll give you pointers here, we'd advise that you look more deeply into the matter before making a commitment. The fact that there are numerous diplomas and training certificates available in the field of exporting shows how complex the regulations can be.

To begin with, there's a chance there may be restrictions on the items you wish to sell. Some of those restrictions are obvious, but regional variations are difficult to predict and you'll need to do individual research in each case before entering the market. Laws that aren't specifically related to trade may cover some items. Some pharmaceutical goods, foodstuffs and 'adult literature' have restrictions on them in the UK that are embedded in civil law. The same is true for other countries. The European Union has loosened many historical restrictions, although Britain remains in many ways more resistant to import than export. For information on items that you're not allowed to import into the UK, go to the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs site at **www.defra.gov.uk** and find the section on 'Illegal Imports'.

Research your market

For a general overview, a good place to start your research is the Government's Trade Partners UK site at **www.tradepartners.gov.uk**, where you can look at individual country profiles for prospective markets from Abu

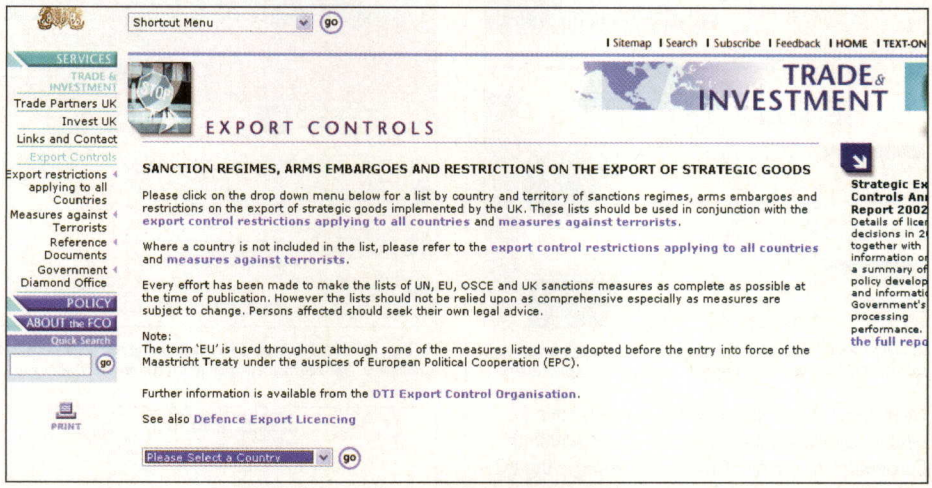
Dhabi to Zimbabwe. For more in-depth research, links to external information about other countries are provided.

Countries the UK is at war with or whose regimes we don't agree with may have specific trade sanctions or embargoes against them, put in place by the European Union or the United Nations. Start looking for information about those countries affected in the Foreign Office Web site's Trade and Investment section at **www.fco.gov.uk**. Trade sanctions have recently been lifted against Iraq, so now's the time to start marketing those 'Comical Ali' DVDs back there.

In addition to restrictions that may be imposed by the country receiving your exports, the UK might require you to treat some items differently to others. Certain items are classed as 'Dangerous Goods' and you'll need to complete some extra documentation in order to ship them – a 'Dangerous Goods note'. The transport of Dangerous Goods is such a specialist field that it has its own dedicated magazines and training courses. Chances are you won't want to be exporting tankers full of irritants or inflammable substances, but if you do you can start your research at the Health and Safety Executive's Dangerous Goods Web site at **www.hse.gov.uk/spd/cdg**.

The great paperchase

Dangerous Goods notes are just one piece of documentation you may need. The whole process of exporting goods correctly is swamped in paperwork, including customs notices, correct invoicing, tracking documentation and appropriate taxation details. Depending on where you're exporting to, you may require an ECSI or Export Cargo Shipping Instruction, a Standard Shipping note and a customs invoice. You'll need additional documentation to satisfy customs too, but we'll come to that in a moment. A Standard Shipping note is a form that lists a variety of items, including a detailed description of the goods you are shipping and various required reference numbers for customs and freight as well as your own administration.


Shortcut Menu
Sitemap | Search | Subscribe | Feedback | HOME | TEXT-ON
SERVICES
TRADE & INVESTMENT
Trade Partners UK
Invest UK
Links and Contact
Export Controls
Export restrictions applying to all Countries
Measures against Terrorists
Reference Documents
Government Diamond Office
POLICY
ABOUT the FCO
Quick Search
PRINT
TRADE & INVESTMENT
EXPORT CONTROLS
SANCTION REGIMES, ARMS EMBARGOES AND RESTRICTIONS ON THE EXPORT OF STRATEGIC GOODS
Please click on the drop down menu below for a list by country and territory of sanctions regimes, arms embargoes and restrictions on the export of strategic goods implemented by the UK. These lists should be used in conjunction with the export control restrictions applying to all countries and measures against terrorists.
Where a country is not included in the list, please refer to the export control restrictions applying to all countries and measures against terrorists.
Every effort has been made to make the lists of UN, EU, OSCE and UK sanctions measures as complete as possible at the time of publication. However the lists should not be relied upon as comprehensive especially as measures are subject to change. Persons affected should seek their own legal advice.
Note:
The term 'EU' is used throughout although some of the measures listed were adopted before the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty under the auspices of European Political Cooperation (EPC).
Further information is available from the DTI Export Control Organisation.
See also Defence Export Licencing
Please Select a Country
Strategic Ex
Controls An
Report 2002
Details of lice
decisions in 2
together with
information o
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the full repo

*Check the Foreign Investment section of **www.fco.gov.uk** for trade restrictions before you start selling Cuban cigars in North Korea...*

Luckily for exporters, there's an organisation dedicated to smoothing this process. SITPRO Ltd is a company that was originally established by the Government in partnership with traders to help people with the documentation required to trade abroad. Its Web site is a useful port of call – but its main contribution to simplifying export procedures is as the distributor of a piece of software called 'WebElecTra'. This is a system which automates the creation of international trading documents online. Go to **www.sitpro.org.uk** and find the list of WebElecTra providers. The online manual at **www.sitpro.org.uk/webelectra/manual** also provides you with a good overview of what's involved in the whole process of exporting goods. At **www.exportbuyer.com** you can have a free trial of the system. A year's access will cost you £299, which is worth it considering the possible costs of getting your documentation wrong.

"THE WHOLE PROCESS OF EXPORTING GOODS CORRECTLY IS SWAMPED IN PAPERWORK"

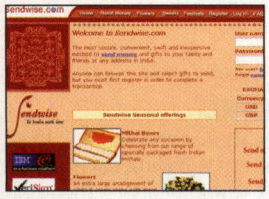
A commercial or customs invoice will also be required to accompany your exported goods, for the use of UK customs. Many of the details included are similar, but the purpose of this invoice is so that customs can assess the duty and taxes payable on the exported goods. HM Customs and Excise clear up some of the complexities at their Web site at **www.hmce.gov.uk**. You'll find sections dedicated to trading on the Internet and exporting goods. The information available is comprehensive, ranging from whether you need to charge VAT on goods for export, which goods need additional duty paid (essentially another form of tax), which goods are exempt and which are reduced. To classify your goods for export and find out in advance what additional charges you may incur, you can use the Intrastat Classification Nomenclature (ICN) search facility at **www.uktradeinfo.com**. Although the site is subscription based, you can search the ICN database for free.

Import regulations

If you're a truly international trader and you want to import goods, there are even more forms to fill in. 'C88' customs declarations notify HMCE how to enter goods into their freight-handling computer system (known as 'CHIEF – Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight'). They're included in SITPRO's WebElecTra package and can be printed out for keying in by HMCE, or sent electronically.

Another gem you'll discover while making an inspection of the HM Customs and Excise

Case study: Sendwise.com

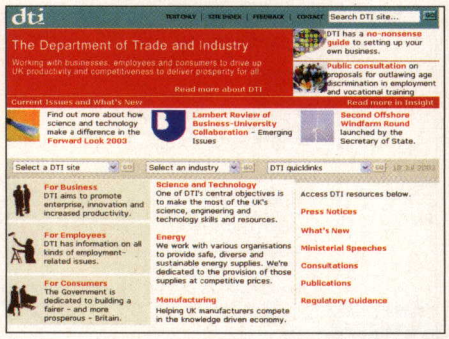


Indians abroad can send home money and gifts any time using the unique Sendwise service – an international business made possible by the Net

AS BUSINESS IDEAS go, Sendwise is as unique and simple as they get. There are many occasions in the Indian calendar when an exchange of gifts is customary. For expatriates living in the UK and US, it hasn't always been easy to find and send those traditional Indian items back home. Sendwise aims to fill that gap.

This is an instance where the Web is able to do something that 'traditional' businesses would find difficult. Having a Web presence enables Sendwise to be accessible from all over the world – wherever Indian expatriates have settled. Its catalogue of goods and services translates easily online, and because its business is focused in one foreign market, it's able to manage distribution easily. Although Sendwise is a UK business it can accept orders from the US and Europe, and the goods are distributed from within India.

*To make sure you keep HM Customs and Excise happy when trading abroad, check out their site at **www.hmce.gov.uk** for export advice*


dti
The Department of Trade and Industry
Working with businesses, employees and consumers to drive up UK productivity and competitiveness to deliver prosperity for all.
Read more about DTI
Current Issues and What's New
Read more in Insight
Find out more about how science and technology make a difference in the Forward Look 2003
Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration - Emerging Issues
Second Offshore Windfarm Round launched by the Secretary of State.
For Business
DTI aims to promote enterprise, innovation and increased productivity.
Science and Technology
One of DTI's central objectives is to make the most of the UK's science, engineering and technology skills and resources.
For Employees
DTI has information on all kinds of employment-related issues.
Energy
We work with various organisations to provide safe, diverse and sustainable energy supplies. We're dedicated to the provision of those supplies at competitive prices.
For Consumers
The Government is dedicated to building a fairer - and more prosperous - Britain.
Manufacturing
Helping UK manufacturers compete in the knowledge driven economy.
Access DTI resources below.
Press Notices
What's New
Ministerial Speeches
Consultations
Publications
Regulatory Guidance

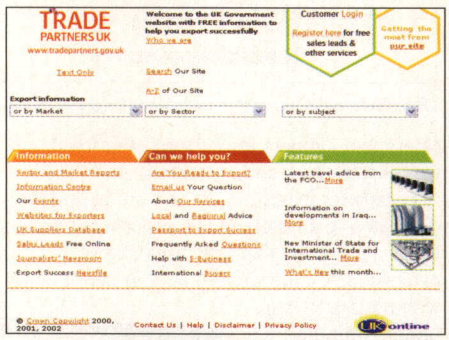
The Dept of Trade & Industry site covers trading abroad, exports and eCommerce. The 'site map' explains which bits are relevant to you

regulations covering exports is that you have to declare all transactions with VAT added within the European Community to a central listing – the EC sales list. This requires the submission of more forms, available through the HM Customs site in the Importing, Exporting and EC Trade section.

Pick the right supplier

You can avoid constantly repeating the complex export process on every order by using foreign distributors. In this scenario you don't ship goods directly to customers, you ship them in bulk to a distributor in the country you want to trade within. There are different kinds of distribution deals and you'll need to negotiate the one that suits your business best. An exclusive distributor, for example, will be the only reseller allowed within an agreed area. A non-exclusive deal would allow you to continue selling goods directly to a country and even use a different distributor. Again, **www.**

*To avoid a nasty extra bill when you try to bulk export, first check with **www.uktradeinfo.com** to find out what extra charges you may incur*



Part guide to countries the UK trades with, part export info search engine, Trade Partners UK proves the Government can get it right

tradepartners.gov.uk is a good place to start looking for European Union distribution.

Trading within the European Union has at least one distinct advantage over trade with other countries: the regulation process is becoming increasingly aligned so that legislation applies across the board. It's happening fairly gradually, but those arguments you hear about banana straightness and whether British chocolate is actually real chocolate have some point to them. European Union laws will affect you if you're trading abroad – and that includes directives on employee rights, and European health and safety directives. The natural place to go for advice in these matters is the Department of Trade and Industry site at **www.dti.gov.uk**, but Microsoft's bCentral site at **www.bcentral.co.uk** has a range of FAQs on trading with the European Union. ■

Advantages of trading within Europe

STARTING YOUR TRADING WITHIN EUROPE IS A STEPPING STONE TO THE WORLD. IN THEORY, THE EUROPEAN UNION SHOULD MAKE IT MUCH EASIER. WE LOOK AT THE MAIN ADVANTAGES...

1. One currency

Dealing in euros in the EU means you only have one exchange rate. UK banks are geared for the euro, so all currency can be handled that way. Get more info at the DTI's Europlanner site **www. dti.gov.uk/europe/europlanner/**.

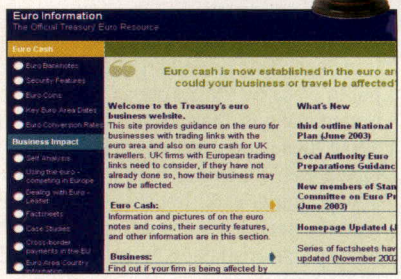
2. Freedom of movement

As an EU citizen you can carry out business within other partner countries easily, making visits and doing business in the European community without the initial need for any documentation other than your EU passport.

3. Free trade

While other countries can impose duties and taxes on imported goods, the EU ensures it doesn't happen within its community. EU countries cannot tax imports from member countries differently, or impose quotas or regulations.

Web resources


Euro Information
The Official Treasury Euro Resource
Euro Cash
Business Impact
Euro cash is now established in the euro ar
could your business or travel be affected
Welcome to the Treasury's euro business website.
This site provides guidance on the euro for businesses with trading links with the euro area and also on euro cash for UK travellers. UK firms with European trading links need to consider, if they have not already done so, how their business may now be affected.
Euro Cash:
Information and pictures of on the euro notes and coins, their security features, and other information are in this section.
Business:
Find out if your firm is being affected by
What's New
third outline National Plan (June 2003)
Local Authority Euro Preparations Guidanc
New members of Stan Committee on Euro Pr (June 2003)
Homepage Updated (
Series of factsheets hav updated (November 200

Euro Information

www.euro.gov.uk

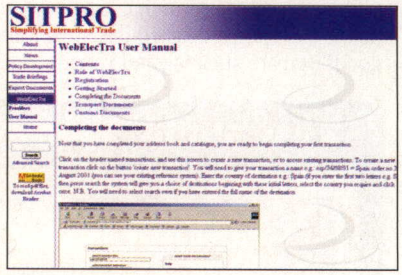
Many of the resources we've provided come from various Government departments, so the natural choice for advice on doing business with the euro would be the Treasury Department's Euro Information source. It's packed with useful information, conversion tables and case studies.

Microsoft bCentral
Small business advic
Home | Marketing | Finance | Technology | Administration | Services
Marketing
Customer service
eBusiness
Marketing basics
Online marketing
Planning
Trading abroad
EU FAQ
Import FAQ
Sell abroad FAQ
EU trading FAQ
Web sites
You're in: Home → Marketing → Trading abroad
Trading abroad & overseas
International trade and trading abroad. Essenti small business, on conducting trade overseas.
EU business legislation FAQ
As our the laws and regulations in the UK increa keep yourself abreast of what you do and don't
Import regulations FAQ
If your business imports from overseas, quickly ascertain you'r be, in order to continue bringing goods into the country.
Selling abroad FAQ
When looking to sell overseas, stay ahead of regulatory requir minutes appraising what you need to know.
Trading within the European single market FAQ
Be aware of the emerging issues and legislation that come fro European market.

bCentral

www.bcentral.co.uk

bCentral, Microsoft's business resource, is a handy repository of simple Question and Answer-based articles. It's great for all aspects of business, but has particularly good sections on Internet trade and trading abroad.



SITPRO

www.sitpro.org.uk

Without SITPRO you could well find yourself snowed under a thousand forms. If you're even thinking about getting into the export business, this site is a must to visit.

all packages feature...

- Microsoft Windows 2003/2000 NT based Web Services running IIS
- Microsoft Frontpage 2002 Server Extensions
- FREE Domain Name Registration or transfer
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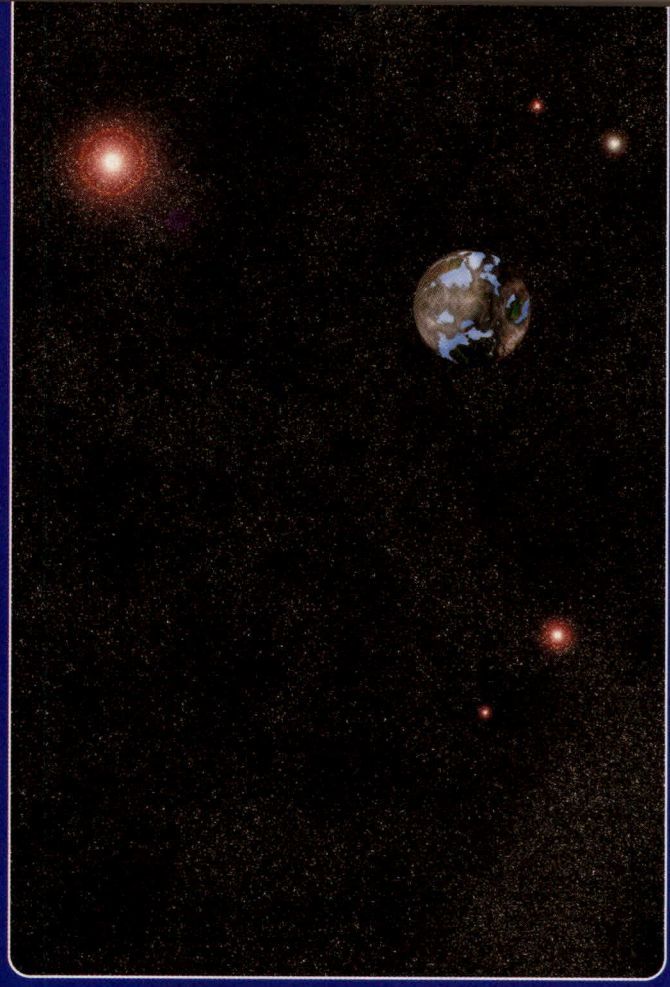
- FREE Dial-up Access

...technology for Humans, provided by Humans

- **24x7x365** Free Technical Support by Microsoft Certified Engineers
- No automated replys
- Personal account Manager
- Unique Powerful Web Based Control Panel



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HOME Package

- 100Mb web space
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- Frontpage Server extensions
- Live Stats
- Free unlimited updates
- Free dial-up access

£5 per month*

* this package is only available on annual contract

COMMERCE Package

- 200Mb web space
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- POP3/SMTP email & web-mail
- Live Stats
- Frontpage server extensions

£18 per month

£180 pa. Annual contract 2 months FREE with no set up fee

RESELLER Package

- Host unlimited domains
- ASP/ASP.net
- SSL
- POP3/SMTP email & web-mail
- Live Stats
- Frontpage server extensions

£45 per month

£450 pa. Annual contract 2 months FREE with no set up fee

ENTERPRISE Package

- 1000Mb web space
- Mirrored/load balanced servers
- ASP/ASP.net
- SSL
- POP3/SMTP email & web-mail
- Live Stats

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£1,200 pa. Annual contract 2 months FREE with no set up fee

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All trademarks acknowledged, Prices exclude VAT (17.5%)

In brief:
Task: Getting listed on search engines
Software I need: Text editor or any WYSIWYG package and a browser
Difficulty: It shouldn't tax you too much
Time I need: Half an hour

Get your site listed on search engines

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT YOUR SITE IS TO MAKE SURE IT GETS SEEN BY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE. HOW YOU SET ABOUT THIS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

BUILDING WEB SITES is all well and good, but there's a key question you need to ask yourself at some point: how am I going to get my site in front of the audience? Everyone who's ever built a site has wondered the same thing, but the answer is simple – register with search engines.

Getting your Web site onto a search engine is more important than your colour scheme, navigation or animation – what's the point if your site remains invisible during its online life? Yours could be the best-crafted site, with stunning content, but it won't make the slightest difference if it's not being seen by the target audience.

In this tutorial we'll show you how to add a couple of simple meta tags to your home page which will help make it accessible to the search engines, and give you some general guidelines. Once you have your page sorted out and online, it's simply a case of submitting by hand to Google – which is pretty much considered to be the best search engine on the Net – and then to Yahoo. Once submitted it may take a little while before your site gets listed, but it's worth the wait to get visitors and give your site the viewing it deserves.

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset
<script language="JavaScript">
<!--
function MM_openBrWindow(theURL,winName,features) { //v2.0
  window.open(theURL,winName,features);
}
//-->
</script>
<meta name="keywords" content=" ">

</head>

<body bgcolor="#6D7E8B" text="#000000">
<table width="100%" border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding=
  <tr>
    <td valign="middle">
      <div align="center"><a href="main.html"><img src="mar
a><br>
```

1 Open your page

Open the home page of the site you wish to get listed. In the **<head>** section at the top of the page add a new tag **<meta name="keywords" content="words in here">**, replacing the text with your keywords.

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<script language="JavaScript">
<!--
function MM_openBrWindow(theURL,winName,features) { //v2.0
  window.open(theURL,winName,features);
}
//-->
</script>
<meta name="keywords" content="markjsb, design, graphic, new media, media, interactive, flash, ph
illustrator, dreamweaver, tutorials, illustration, 3d illustration, 2d illustration, designer, dv
production, web authoring, cd authoring, web, cd, dvd authoring, animation, actionscript, ">

</head>

<body bgcolor="#6D7E8B" text="#000000">
<table width="100%" border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" height="100%">
  <tr>
    <td valign="middle">
      <div align="center"><a href="main.html"><img src="markjsb.gif" width="170" height="125" bor
a><br>
    </div>
    </td>
  </tr>
</table>
</body>
</html>
```

2 Add keywords

Keywords can be phrases as well as individual words, but try not to repeat the words too much. This can sometimes render your keywords useless, as they're ignored. Keep the total number of keywords to within 200-400 characters.

```
//-->
</script>
<meta name="keywords" content="markjsb, desig
illustrator, dreamweaver, tutorials, illustra
production, web authoring, cd authoring, web,
<meta name="description" content="markjsb, ne
</head>

<body bgcolor="#6D7E8B" text="#000000">
<table width="100%" border="0" cellspacing="0
  <tr>
    <td valign="middle">
      <div align="center"><a href="main.html"
a><br>
```

3 The description

You also need to add meta tags for the description, so add the line **<meta name="description" content="your description">** and keep this down to a 100-200 character description of your site.

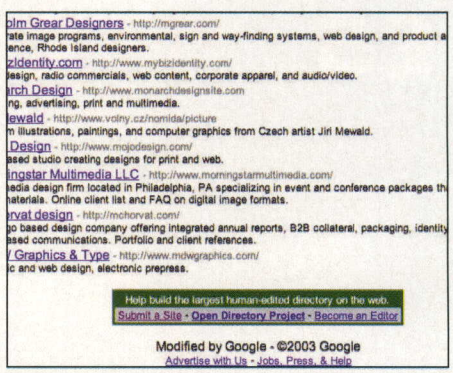
```
<html>
<head>
<title>markjsb, animation, actionscript, design, graphic, new
media, media, interactive, flash</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html;
charset=iso-8859-1">
<script language="JavaScript">
<!--
function MM_openBrWindow(theURL,winName,features) { //v2.0
  window.open(theURL,winName,features);
}
//-->
</script>
<meta name="keywords" content="markjsb, design, graphic, new
media, media, interactive, flash, photoshop, illustrator,
dreamweaver, tutorials, illustration, 3d illustration, 2d
illustration, designer, dvd, dvd production, web authoring, cd
```

4 Page title

You can help your site get listed by changing the page title from something fairly readable to around 15 words that have been selected from your keywords. Now save your page and upload it to your Web space through your favourite FTP software.

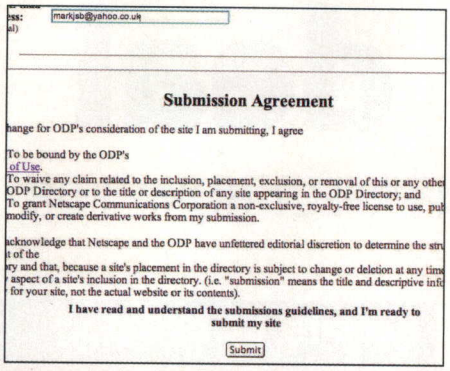
5 Launch your Web browser

Now launch your Web browser and head over to the Google site at **www.google.com**. When the page has loaded click on the 'Directory' tab. You'll notice here that the Web page is split into different categories, so find the one that best suits your site.


blm Grear Designers - http://mgrear.com/
ate image programs, environmental, sign and way-finding systems, web design, and product a
ence, Rhode Island designers.
zIdentity.com - http://www.mybizidentity.com/
esign, radio commercials, web content, corporate apparel, and audio/video.
rch Design - http://www.monarchdesignsite.com
ng, advertising, print and multimedia.
ewald - http://www.volny.cz/nomida/picture
n illustrations, paintings, and computer graphics from Czech artist Jiri Mewald.
Design - http://www.mojodesign.com/
ased studio creating designs for print and web.
ingstar Multimedia LLC - http://www.morningstarmultimedia.com/
edia design firm located in Philadelphia, PA specializing in event and conference packages th
aterials. Online client list and FAQ on digital image formats.
rvat design - http://mchorvat.com/
go based design company offering integrated annual reports, B2B collateral, packaging, identity
ased communications. Portfolio and client references.
/ Graphics & Type - http://www.mdwgraphics.com/
c and web design, electronic prepress.
Help build the largest human-edited directory on the web.
Submit a Site - Open Directory Project - Become an Editor
Modified by Google - ©2003 Google
Advertise with Us - Jobs, Press, & Help

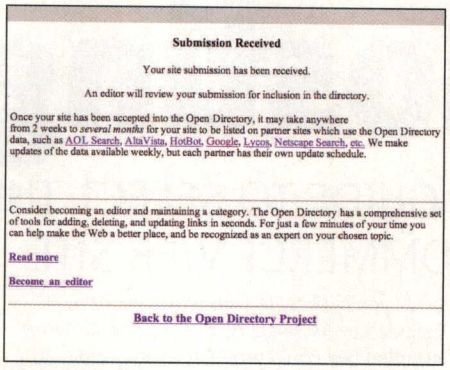
6 Find the right listing

It will probably take several clicks to find the location where you'd like to be listed. (Remember that if you select the wrong place your site may be ignored.) At the bottom of the page you'll see a link to 'Submit a Site'. Click this and read the instructions.


markjsb@yahoo.co.uk
Submission Agreement
hange for ODP's consideration of the site I am submitting, I agree
To be bound by the ODP's
of Use.
To waive any claim related to the inclusion, placement, exclusion, or removal of this or any other
ODP Directory or to the title or description of any site appearing in the ODP Directory; and
To grant Netscape Communications Corporation a non-exclusive, royalty-free license to use, pub
modify, or create derivative works from my submission.
acknowledge that Netscape and the ODP have unfettered editorial discretion to determine the stru
t of the
ry and that, because a site's placement in the directory is subject to change or deletion at any time
aspect of a site's inclusion in the directory. (i.e. "submission" means the title and descriptive infc
for your site, not the actual website or its contents).
I have read and understand the submissions guidelines, and I'm ready to submit my site
Submit

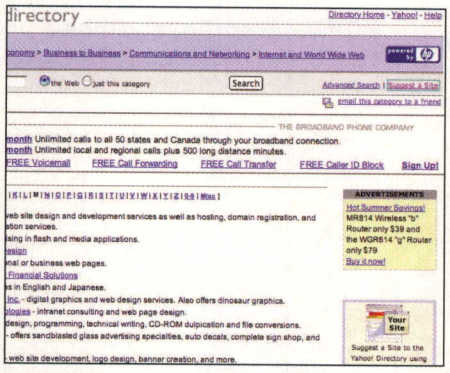
7 Add the URL

You'll be given a brief description of other sites in the category you've selected, so this is a good way to make sure you're in the right place. You can then add your URL, site title and a brief description of your site before hitting 'Submit'.


Submission Received
Your site submission has been received.
An editor will review your submission for inclusion in the directory.
Once your site has been accepted into the Open Directory, it may take anywhere from 2 weeks to several months for your site to be listed on partner sites which use the Open Directory data, such as AOL Search, AltaVista, HotBot, Google, Lycos, Netscape Search, etc. We make updates of the data available weekly, but each partner has their own update schedule.
Consider becoming an editor and maintaining a category. The Open Directory has a comprehensive set of tools for adding, deleting, and updating links in seconds. For just a few minutes of your time you can help make the Web a better place, and be recognized as an expert on your chosen topic.
Read more
Become an editor
Back to the Open Directory Project

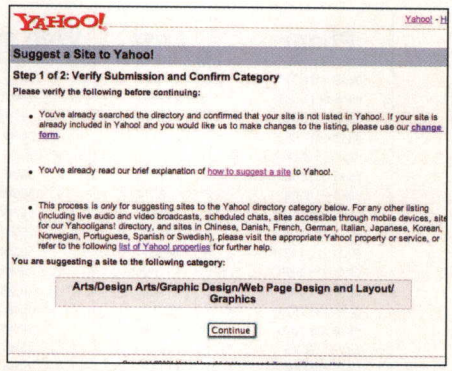
8 Sit and wait

Once the site has been submitted you're given information about which search engines use the directory. As you can see Yahoo isn't in there – and that's another big search site, so let's point our browser over to the Yahoo site to enter ours in there.


directory
Directory Home - Yahoo! - Help
Search
Advanced Search | Suggest a Site
email this category to a friend
THE BROADBAND PHONE COMPANY
month Unlimited calls to all 50 states and Canada through your broadband connection.
month Unlimited local and regional calls plus 500 long distance minutes.
FREE Voicemail
FREE Call Forwarding
FREE Call Transfer
FREE Caller ID Block
Sign Up!
ADVERTISEMENTS
Hot Summer Savings!
MR814 Wireless "b" Router only $39 and the WGR614 "g" Router only $79
Buy it now!
Suggest a Site to the Yahoo! Directory using

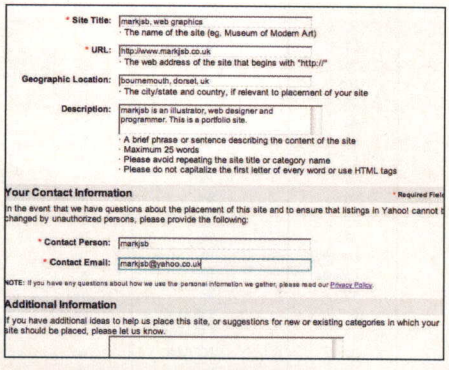
9 Find the right place

Once at **www.yahoo.com**, scroll down to find the right category. When you've found the one that best describes your site, you'll see in the top right of the screen a 'Suggest a Site' logo. Click this and you'll be taken to another page.


YAHOO!
Suggest a Site to Yahoo!
Step 1 of 2: Verify Submission and Confirm Category
Please verify the following before continuing:
You've already searched the directory and confirmed that your site is not listed in Yahoo!. If your site is already included in Yahoo! and you would like us to make changes to the listing, please use our change form.
You've already read our brief explanation of how to suggest a site to Yahoo!.
This process is only for suggesting sites to the Yahoo! directory category below. For any other listing (including live audio and video broadcasts, scheduled chats, sites accessible through mobile devices, site for our Yahooligans! directory, and sites in Chinese, Danish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish or Swedish), please visit the appropriate Yahoo! property or service, or refer to the following list of Yahoo! properties for further help.
You are suggesting a site to the following category:
Arts/Design Arts/Graphic Design/Web Page Design and Layout/ Graphics
Continue

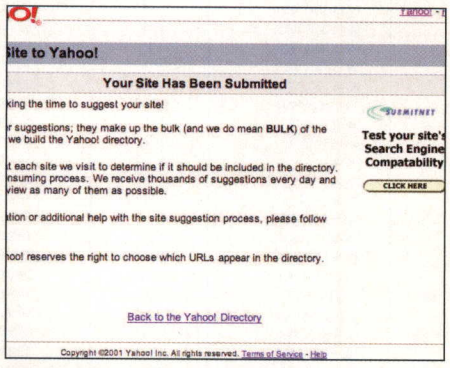
10 Business to business

If you want to enter a business into Yahoo in the Business to Business section, you have to pay for it, otherwise you can add it free of charge. Click on the standard submission, which is free, and you'll be taken to a page to enter your details.


* Site Title: markjsb, web graphics
· The name of the site (eg. Museum of Modern Art)
* URL: http://www.markjsb.co.uk
· The web address of the site that begins with "http://"
Geographic Location: bournemouth, dorset, uk
· The city/state and country, if relevant to placement of your site
Description: markjsb is an illustrator, web designer and programmer. This is a portfolio site.
· A brief phrase or sentence describing the content of the site
· Maximum 25 words
· Please avoid repeating the site title or category name
· Please do not capitalize the first letter of every word or use HTML tags
Your Contact Information
* Required Fiel
n the event that we have questions about the placement of this site and to ensure that listings in Yahoo! cannot b changed by unauthorized persons, please provide the following:
* Contact Person: markjsb
* Contact Email: markjsb@yahoo.co.uk
NOTE: If you have any questions about how we use the personal information we gather, please read our Privacy Policy.
Additional Information
f you have additional ideas to help us place this site, or suggestions for new or existing categories in which your site should be placed, please let us know.

11 Add your details

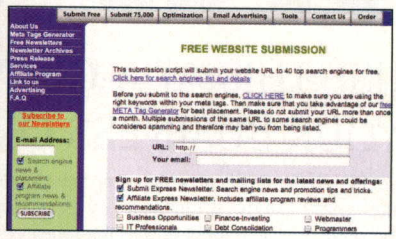
You can now add your details to Yahoo, including URL, site title, description, additional info and your contact details. Once all these have been filled out, click 'Submit' at the bottom of the screen and your details should be added to the sites.


ite to Yahoo!
Your Site Has Been Submitted
king the time to suggest your site!
r suggestions; they make up the bulk (and we do mean BULK) of the we build the Yahoo! directory.
t each site we visit to determine if it should be included in the directory. nsuming process. We receive thousands of suggestions every day and view as many of them as possible.
tion or additional help with the site suggestion process, please follow
hoo! reserves the right to choose which URLs appear in the directory.
SUBMITNET
Test your site's Search Engine Compatability
CLICK HERE
Back to the Yahoo! Directory
Copyright ©2001 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved. Terms of Service - Help

12 Sit back and wait

Once your details have been submitted, it's a case of waiting until your site's been added to the index. Of course, if you are flushed with cash you can always pay for it to be submitted, and this should give you a guaranteed listing in the index.

Web resources


Submit Free
Submit 75,000
Optimization
Email Advertising
Tools
Contact Us
Order
FREE WEBSITE SUBMISSION
This submission script will submit your website URL to 40 top search engines for free.
Click here for search engines list and details
Before you submit to the search engines, CLICK HERE to make sure you are using the right keywords within your meta tags. Then make sure that you take advantage of our free META Tag Generator for best placement. Please do not submit your URL more than once a month. Multiple submissions of the same URL to some search engines could be considered spamming and therefore may ban you from being listed.
Subscribe to our Newsletters
E-mail Address:
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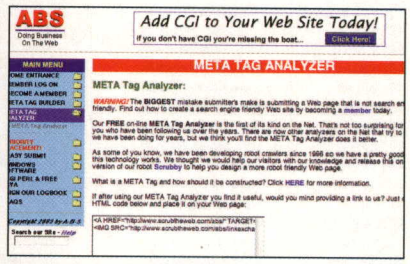
Sign up for FREE newsletters and mailing lists for the latest news and offerings:
Submit Express Newsletter: Search engine news and promotion tips and tricks.
Affiliate Express Newsletter: Includes affiliate program reviews and recommendations.
SUBSCRIBE
Business Opportunities
Finance-Investing
Webmaster
IT Professionals
Debt Consolidation
Programmers

Submit Express

submitexpress.com/submit.html

Here's a Web site that will automatically add your site to the 40 top search engines for free. This saves time in registering, as you can get the vast amount of sites out of the way with one easy submission. It's still worth submitting your site to Google and Yahoo by hand, though!


ABS
Doing Business On The Web
Add CGI to Your Web Site Today!
If you don't have CGI you're missing the boat...
Click Here!
MAIN MENU
META TAG ANALYZER
META Tag Analyzer:
WARNING! The BIGGEST mistake submitter's make is submitting a Web page that is not search en friendly. Find out how to create a search engine friendly Web site by becoming a member today.
Our FREE on-line META Tag Analyzer is the first of its kind on the Net. That's not too surprising for you who have been following us over the years. There are now other analyzers on the Net that try to we have been doing for years, but we think you'll find the META Tag Analyzer does it better.
As some of you know, we have been developing robot crawlers since 1998 so we have a pretty good this technology works. We thought we would help our visitors with our knowledge and release this on version of our robot Scrubby to help you design a more robot friendly Web page.
What is a META Tag and how should it be constructed? Click HERE for more information.
If after using our META Tag Analyzer you find it useful, would you mind providing a link to us? Just HTML code below and place it on your Web page:
<A HREF="http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/" TARGET="
<IMG SRC="http://www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/linkescha
Search our Site - Help

Scrub the Web

www.scrubtheweb.com/abs/meta-check.html

This site can check yours to make sure it's search engine-friendly. The tools help make your site more friendly to the robots that search the Web and index pages together. Its designers made those very robots that search the Web, so they know what they're doing.

Jargon buster

Meta tags

These are tags that sit inside the head section of your site and are invisible to the browser, but are there specifically to help your site get listed on search engines. Special tools are available to help you write them and make them as search engine-friendly as possible.

Directory

Most search engines have a database that is divided into different sections. This helps the search engine keep things organised – and it's your job to find the right directory which will help get you noticed and in front of your visitors.

Sponsored by:
HOSTWAY
THE HOSTING COMPANY
0808 180 1880
www.hostway-uk.com

Pick the perfect Web hosting deal

USE THIS AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SELECT THE PERFECT HOME FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ECOMMERCE WEB SITE

SELECTING A WEB hosting company to look after your business is just as tricky as picking the right ISP to connect you to the Internet. There's a baffling array of deals to choose from, each offering slightly different services and each charging slightly different prices. In short, there's no simple answer.

Our aim in compiling this guide is to allow you to see the different types of packages available and help you glean some idea of the costs you're likely to face. While we haven't included every single deal offered by the firms included (we could probably fill the whole of YBO with them) we have listed the products that we think are most relevant to our readers.

To use these listings effectively we recommend using the information below to pick out a handful of firms that cater for your needs. The next step is to contact each directly to discuss your requirements further.

Keeping up to date

WHILE WE TRY and ensure that all the information in our listings is up to date, the occasional error does creep through. If you would like to update your current details, drop an email to **pi@paragon.co.uk** with the information you would like changed.

NAME	URL	Package	Phone	Cost	Web space	POP3 Accounts	FrontPage Extensions	Phone Support
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Starters	0845 6012 586	£17.88	Yes	15	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Home	0845 6012 586	£59.88	100Mb	50	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Business	0845 6012 586	£107.88	300Mb	200	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Professionals	0845 6012 586	£203.88	800Mb	500	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Starters	0845 6012 586	£17.88	Yes	15	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Home	0845 6012 586	£59.88	100Mb	50	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Business	0845 6012 586	£107.88	300Mb	200	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Professionals	0845 6012 586	£203.88	800Mb	500	Yes	Yes
123-reg	www.123-reg.co.uk	Regular	0900 22 11 123	£45.87	250Mb	10	Yes	Yes
123-reg	www.123-reg.co.uk	Xtra	0900 22 11123	£69.87	500Mb	25	Yes	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Standard	0870 739 2020	£100.00	100Mb	15	Yes	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	PHP	0870 739 2020	£150.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Cold Fusion	0870 739 2020	£250.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Java	0870 739 2020	£300.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Bronze	0845 1668386	£20	10Mb	2	Yes	No
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Silver	0845 1668386	£64.99	25Mb	10	Yes	Yes
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Bronze	0845 1668386	£79.99	50Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Active ISP	www.activeisp.co.uk	Small Business	0870 7304000	£143.40	35Mb	10	Yes	Yes
AMEN hosting	www.amen.uk.com	promo WebPRO	None	£6	100Mb	10	Yes	No
AMEN hosting	www.amen.uk.com	regular WebPRO	None	£54	100Mb	10	Yes	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	10Mb	08707 449227	£70.00	10Mb	1	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	20Mb	08707 449227	£122.00	20Mb	5	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	50Mb	08707 449227	£190.00	50Mb	5	No	No
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Pro	08707 555565	£99.95	25Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Premier	08707 555565	£199.95	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise	08707 555565	£349.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise NT	08707 555565	£399.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Light	0845 355 1000	£29.99	10Mb	10	No	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Starter	0845 355 1000	£59.99	50Mb	20	Yes	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Soho	0845 355 1000	£99.00	100Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Enterprise	0845 355 1000	£199.00	200Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Professional	0845 355 1000	£399.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Advanced	0845 355 1000	£699.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Enterprise Plan	0870 7414151	£89.99	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Commerce Plan	0870 7414151	£179.99	250Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Efficient Hosting	www.efficienthosting.co.uk	Basic Plan	None	£167.40	10 MB	5	Yes	No
Efficient Hosting	www.efficienthosting.co.uk	Standard Plan	None	£239.40	75 MB	40	Yes	No
Efficient Hosting	www.efficienthosting.co.uk	Advanced Plan	None	£287.40	125 MB	60	Yes	No
EliteServe UK	www.eliteukserve.net	Business Kick Start	0870 741 5898	£49	50Mb	20	No	Yes
EliteServe UK	www.eliteukserve.net	Business Professional	0870 741 5898	£99.00	100Mb	100	No	Yes
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Home User	01452 541260	£60.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Business User	01452 541260	£199.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Ghoulnet	www.ghoulnet.co.uk	Business Web	0800 0747581	£69.00	100Mb	50	Yes	No
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Bronze Hosting	0870 922 4000	£70.50	50Mb	5	£50/year	Yes
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Silver Hosting	0870 922 4000	£264.38	100Mb	10	£50/year	Yes
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Gold Hosting	0870 922 4000	£346.63	250Mb	50	£50/year	Yes
Griffin Internet	www.griffin.net.uk	Windows 2000 Webspace	0870 0007100	£199	150Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Silver	0808 1801880	£89.95	100Mb	5	Yes	No
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Gold	0808 1801880	£134.55	200Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Gold Plus	0808 1801880	£179.55	200MB	30	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Platinum	0808 1801880	£449.55	500MB	50	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Platinum Plus	0808 1801880	£809.95	500Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 50	0870 0500303	£239.88	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 75	0870 0500303	£359.88	75Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 100	0870 0500303	£1199.88	100Mb	10	Yes	Yes

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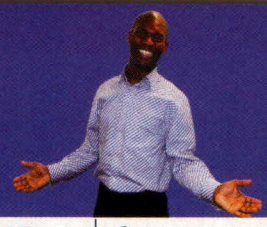

NAME	URL	Package	Phone	Cost	Web space	POP3 Accounts	FrontPage Extensions	Phone Support
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Personal	None	£29.99	50Mb	1	Yes	No
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Advanced	None	£89.99	100Mb	4	Yes	No
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Executive	None	£159.99	200Mb	10	Yes	No
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Entry	0115 9170000	£99.95	250MB	1	No	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Pro	0115 9170000	£199.95	750Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business	0115 9170000	£199	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business eCommerce	0115 9170000	£499	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Toe in the water	020 8426 4446	£49.00	None	None	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Going for a paddle	020 8426 4446	£139.00	10Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Dive, dive, dive	020 8426 4446	£287.00	10Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Namehog	www.namehog.net	Small Business	0870 9059444	£42.00	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Namehog	www.namehog.net	Business Pro	0870 9059444	£60.00	200Mb	25	Yes	Yes
NetBenefit	www.netbenefit.com	Shared Hosting Package	0800 0724696	£180.00	100Mb	None	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	HOME	0800 2987214	£60	100Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	COMMERCE	0800 2987214	£180	200Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	RESELLER	0800 2987214	£450	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	ENTERPRISE	0800 2987214	£1200	1000Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	.NETppliance 800	0800 2987214	£1200	256Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	.NETppliance 1400	0800 2987214	£3600	512Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Starter	0800 0283639	£131.40	20Mb	1	Yes	No
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Starter	0800 0283639	£131.40	20Mb	1	Yes	No
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Pro	0800 0283639	£191.40	150Mb	20	Yes	No
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Power	0800 0283639	£419.40	300Mb	40	Yes	No
Netway	www.netway.co.uk	Small to medium business	07020 939842	£199.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Oscura Ltd	www.oscura.co.uk	Business Development Hosting	0118 959 7200	£150	25Mb	6	Yes	Yes
Oscura Ltd	www.oscura.co.uk	Business Premium Hosting	0118 959 7200	£350	100MB	6	Yes	Yes
PMHIS.Net	www.pmhis.net	Web+	None	£60.00	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	No
Positive Internet Co	www.positive-internet.com	Shared Hosting	0800 316006	£250.00	120Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Valuespace	0870 7303170	£49.99	100Mb	50	No	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Optisapce	0870 7303170	£99.99	1Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Commercespace	0870 7303170	£199.99	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Saffas	www.saffas.com	WS10	0781 628 2991	£10	10Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Saffas	www.saffas.com	WS50	0781 628 2991	£40	50Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Saffas	www.saffas.com	WS100	0781 628 2991	£70	100Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Seiretto	seiretto.com	Starter	N/A	£49	15Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Seiretto	seiretto.com	Starter	N/A	£149	300Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Basic	01684 893020	£49.99	10Mb	0	No	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Soho	01684 893020	£69.99	50Mb	1	Yes	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Enterprise	01684 893020	£99.99	100Mb	10	Yes	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Corporate	01684 893020	£149.99	200Mb	20	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Entry	01707 885800	£99.99	40Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Personal	01707 885800	£99.99	80Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Small Business	01707 885800	£249.99	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Net Business	01707 885800	£399.99	400Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Executive	01707 885800	£499.99	400Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Executive E-Commerce	01707 885800	£799.99	600Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo Lite 24/7	N/A	£180	25Mb	25	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Dial4Business	N/A	£120	50Mb	25	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo Daytime	N/A	£180	50Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo 24/7	N/A	£300	50Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Symphony	N/A	£660	100Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Strongnet	www.strongnet.co.uk	Various	01703 866006	Various	50Mb	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Supanames	www.supanames.co.uk	Value Host	0870 1257678	£13.99	35Mb	1	No	Yes
Supanames	www.supanames.co.uk	Value Host Pro	0870 1257678	£23.99	35Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Tigress UK	www.tigress-uk.com	Web50	0870 321 9528	£69.99	50Mb	3	No	Yes
Tollon	www.tollon.net	Home User Plan	0800 542 6549	£69.99	25Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Tollon	www.tollon.net	Business Plan 1	0800 542 6549	£99.99	50Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	5 megs	0845 082 0696	£55.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	10 megs	0845 082 0696	£95.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	20 megs	0845 082 0696	£125.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
ValueWebHosts	www.valuewebhosts.com	Plan 1	n/a	£8.99	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	No
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Starter	020 7767 3700	£109.45	10Mb	2	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Designer	020 7767 3700	£197.45	50Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Business	020 7767 3700	£274.45	125Mb	40	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Commerce	020 7767 3700	£384.45	175Mb	60	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Host	0800 11 77 44	£120	25Mb	12	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Business	0800 11 77 44	£215	50Mb	30	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Professional	0800 11 77 44	£480	250Mb	120	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Professional Plus	0800 11 77 44	£1980	250Mb	120	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Entry	0115 917 0000	£99.95	250Mb	1	No	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Pro	0115 917 0000	£199.95	750Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business Pro	0115 917 0000	£199.00	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business E-Commerce	0115 917 0000	£499.00	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Basic Hosting	0800 0151718	£35.00	10Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Economy Hosting	0800 0151718	£50.00	25Mb	2	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Senior Hostings	0800 0151718	£125.00	50Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Executive Hostings	0800 0151718	£200.00	100Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Entry	0845 126 0325	£40.00	25Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Professional	0845 126 0325	£59.99	50	25	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Entry	0845 126 0325	£40.00	200Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Personal Hosting	01784 460896	£39.00	25Mb	20	Yes	No
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Business Hosting	01784 460896	£94.00	200Mb	100	Yes	No
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Premium Hosting	01784 460896	£350.00	500Mb	350	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 1	0845 4584200	£50.00	5Mb	0	No	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 2	0845 4584200	£100.00	25Mb	0	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 3	0845 4584200	£175.00	50Mb	1	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 4	0845 4584200	£500.00	100Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 128	0870 6000971	£1,140	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 256	0870 6000971	£1,740	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 512	0870 6000971	£2,340	40Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ4r 256	0870 6000971	£2,3400	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4r 512	0870 6000971	£2,940	40Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ XTR 128	0870 6000971	£3,540	30Gb Unlimited	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ XTR 1Gb	0870 6000971	£4,740	80Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
ZyWeb Business	www.zyweb.com	ZyWeb Business	01392 209500	£210.00	30Mb	10	No	No

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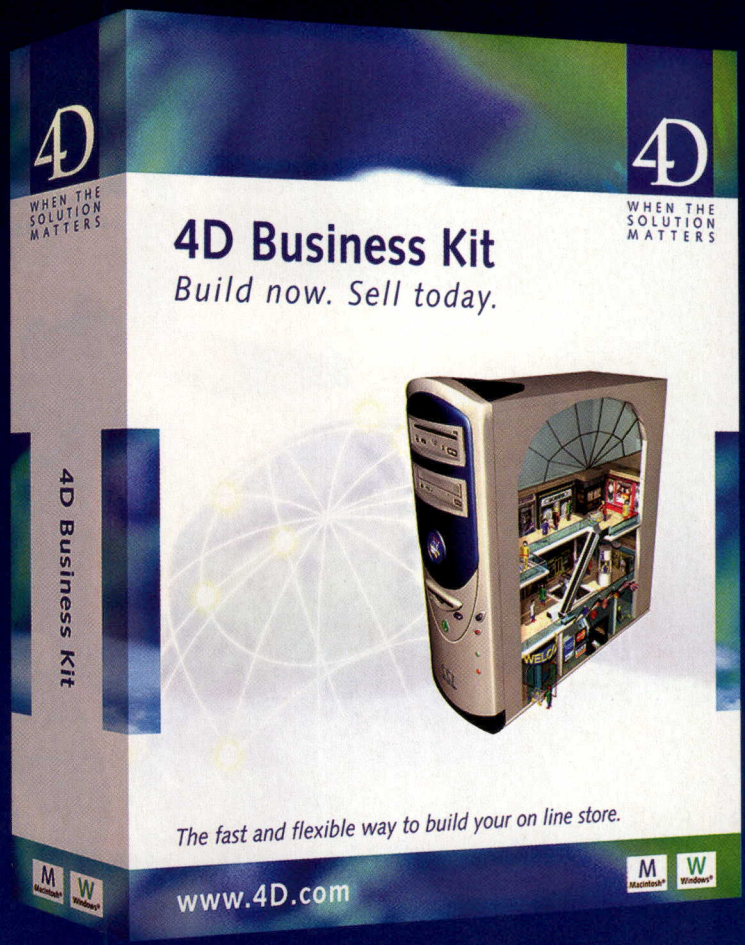
Want to know more? Of course you do. Well, 4D Business Kit is designed specifically for the needs and budgets of small to medium-sized businesses, and contains a number of features designed for Web-building novices. The package comes complete with a store design wizard, featuring 10 templates, to ensure you can start your project in no time at all. A built-in HTML editor means that more advanced users can tinker with their code until they're perfectly happy, and you can even integrate your store fully with industry standard packages like Dreamweaver and GoLive.

The package allows you to build professional looking Web stores with an unlimited number of products featured; each item with its own pictures, description and price. 4D Business Kit's powerful business administration features allow prices to be quoted in several currencies, delivery costs and local tax rates to be automatically calculated and credit card transactions to be processed seamlessly. The package also comes with its own Web server and advanced customer relationship management features to help you get more from your store.



THE PRIZES

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Château de Lardiley Premières Côtes-de-Bordeaux
$ 9.11 Total price per bottle
Add to cart
Château Croizet-Bages Pauillac 1997
Bordeaux
Paul Quié
A mature-ish wine drinking very nicely. This year, you will still find lovely primary fruit on the palate, with a whole spectrum of summer fruits such as red currants, red whortleberries, black currants, mulberries. Very enjoyable.
PAUILLAC
$ 19.87 Total price per bottle
Add to cart

How to win

Entering the competition is a doddle. To stand a chance of winning a copy of 4D Business Kit, simply answer the following question:

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C) Developing databases

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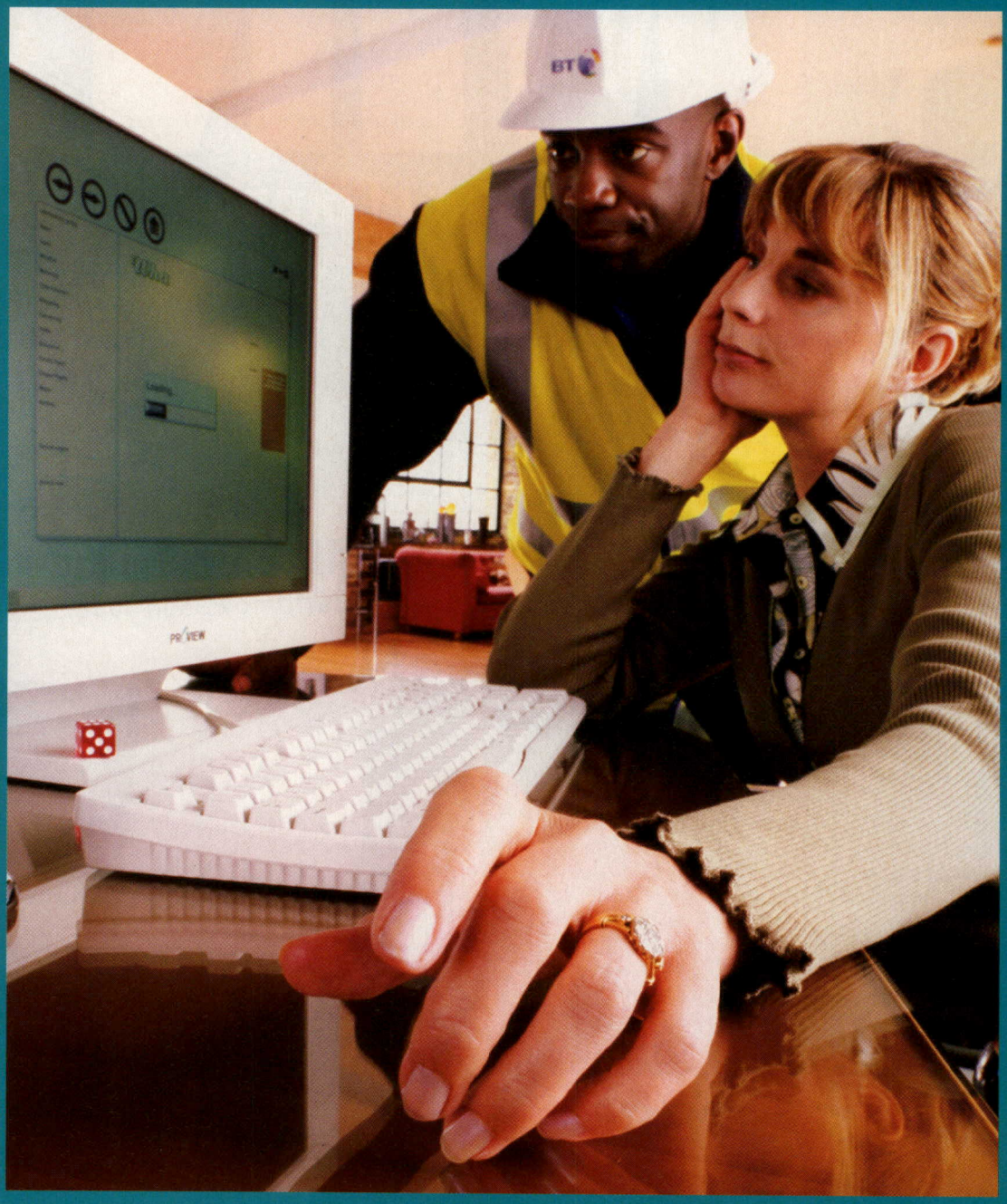
THE RULES: Employees of Paragon Publishing, 4D, their agents, wholesalers and their relatives may not enter. Participants must be over 18 years of age and resident in the UK. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Proof of postage cannot be accepted as proof of receipt and no responsibility can be accepted for lost, delayed or damaged entries.

BT



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Reviews

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ALL THE LATEST INTERNET SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

Welcome...

WHERE CAN YOU find all the latest shiny and most talked about products available? Yeah okay, shops – but the real answer is... right here. This time, hardware and software have combined to create a reviews section to be proud of. Kicking off under the intense flash of our spotlight, there's the rather exciting new 400 digital camera from Olympus. Next, you could flow right through to our verdict on iRiver, while it's a case of little and large with HP's cute Pocket PC and BenQ's stunning 15" plasma screen. Incidentally, this last one would be just the ticket for displaying Hemera's incredible third volume of Photo Objects. Finally, Intego's Content Barrier completes our essential guide to top purchases for this month.

Mark Billen, Staff Writer

On test this issue...

110 **Olympus mju 400**
It's a looker, but does Olympus' new digicam offer quality as well?

114 **Easy Password Manager 2.0**
We road test this utility that lets you store and use your passwords

115 **iRiver iFP 180T**
Despite a minute footprint, this MP3 player packs a sonic punch

117 **Intego Content Barrier**
Protect the kiddies from the harmful side of the Internet

118 **iPAQ h5550**
HP has just launched three new PDAs. We test the high end model

120 **Hemera Photo Objects 3**
Get your hands on a mass of images in this huge collection

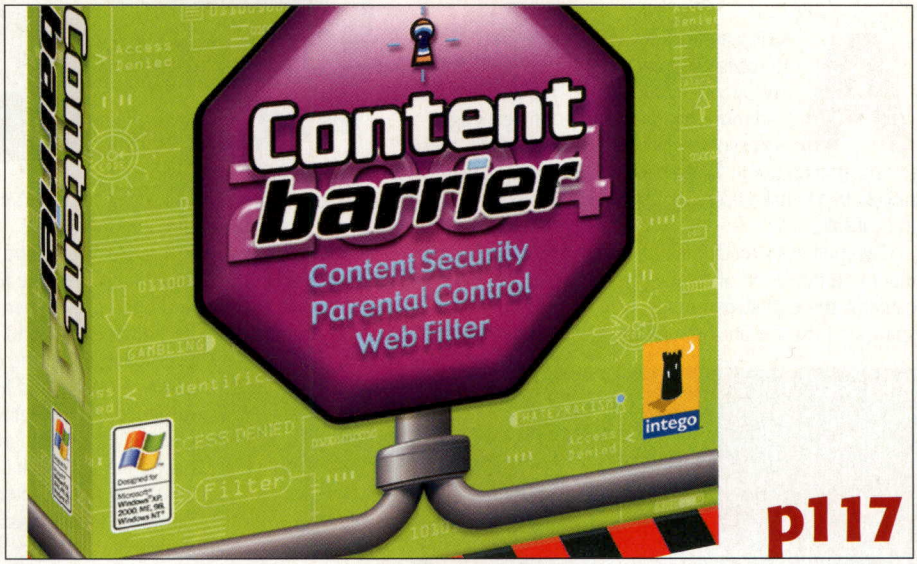
120 **BenQ FP591**
With sleek looks, this LCD screen promises a lot. Does it deliver?

How our ratings work

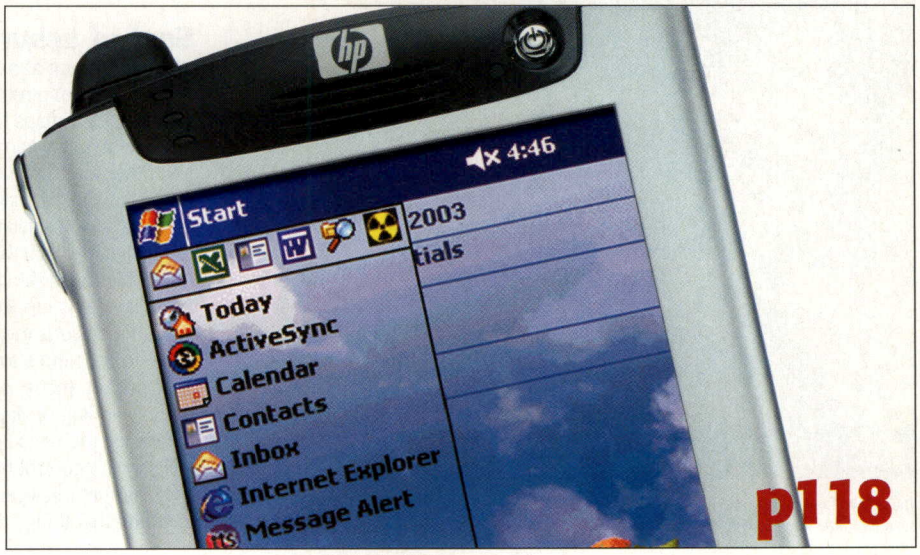
Practical internet ★★ STAR BUY ★★ — A truly excellent product you should buy now. Given to scores of 90% or above

Practical internet RECOMMENDED — It's great, but not totally essential to your well-being. 85% or above

p110



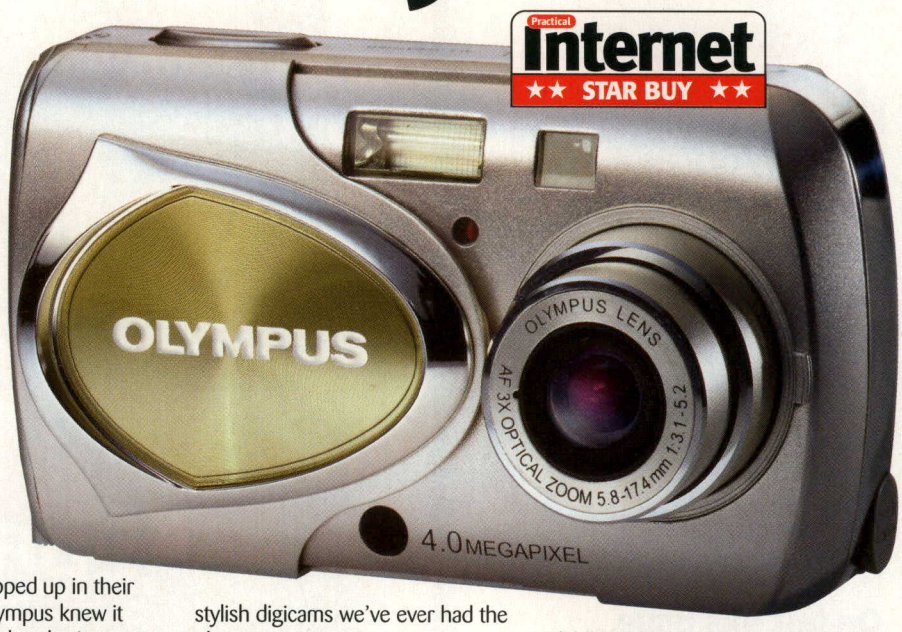
p117



p118

Olympus mju 400

THE LATEST IN OLYMPUS' STYLISH MJU RANGE HAS HIT THE SHELVES. THE QUESTION IS, HAS STYLE TAKEN OVER FROM PICTURE QUALITY?



As digicam makers start to realise that cameras are becoming more and more of a fashion accessory, we're seeing an increase in 'bling-bling' ranges that'll make users the envy of the catwalk.

Olympus has already stolen a march on the world of trendy cameras through its mju range, spawned from the analog mju range that first appeared on the shelves over ten years ago. Back then, the cameras were snapped up in their thousands, and Olympus knew it had a winner on its hands. As a result, it has come as no surprise to see the mju make it into a digital camera range, and there's no doubt that the mju 400 is one of the most stylish digicams we've ever had the pleasure to meet.

The mju 400 managed to reproduce some excellent colours in this flowery scene. However, it did struggle a little when it came to getting the entire frame in focus – certainly not a bad effort though!

The sleek gold and silver casing could melt even the frostiest hearts and bring grown men to tears with its smouldering good looks. Everything about the camera screams quality and it's actually designed to be weatherproof, so it won't give you any grief if you happen to get stuck in a monsoon. That's not to say you can take it down the local baths and take some underwater shots, as it's only weatherproof, not waterproof.

Seal of assurance

Moisture is kept at bay thanks to the inclusion of a rubber coating on all of the small flaps leading to the battery, memory card components and other internal features, preventing any damaging leakages.

Unlike many similar cameras in this range, the mju 400 presents no problems on the portability front. It weighs just 165g and its small dimensions mean that you'll have no problem shoving it into your pocket, ready for action at a party, wedding or day out. The minimalist theme is upheld in fine style by the control buttons, which are small yet intelligently placed, ensuring that things don't get too fiddly when it comes to navigating the menus. Having said this, the fact that they're weatherproof means they're not the easiest buttons to depress and are a bit too sunken for our liking.

As is the norm with Olympus compacts, the mju 400 is turned on and off by sliding across the lens cover. The only trouble with this is that when you turn off the camera, it's quite easy to bash the lens cover against the side of the lens before it has the chance to

What's in the box

PRODUCT: OLYMPUS MJU 400

- mju 400 digital camera
- 16Mb xD-Picture Card
- Li-10B rechargeable battery
- Battery charger
- Remote shutter control
- USB cable
- Video cable
- Camera strap
- CAMEDIA Master 4.1 software
- Instruction manual

The mju 400 really excels when it comes to sunset scenes. By shifting the EV Compensation to -2.0, we managed to capture this beautifully warm sunset at the perfect exposure

retract. On top of this, when you're taking a shot it's fairly easy to accidentally turn the camera off mid-shot by mistakenly pushing the lens slide in, causing no end of frustration when you miss out on that golden photo opportunity.

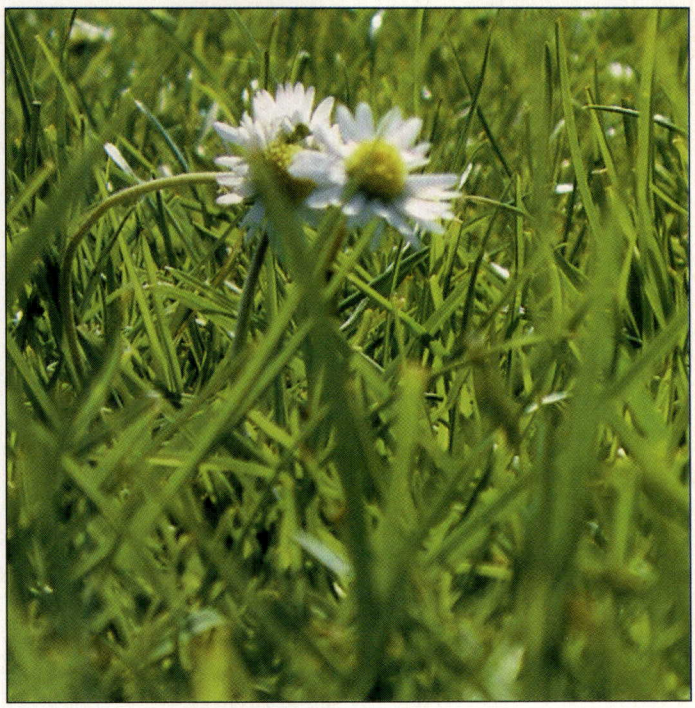
It's been a while since the first Olympus device exhibited this sliding lens cap idea, and perhaps it's about time they reviewed it for future models. Having said that, the lens isn't painfully slow when extending or retracting, and you can be ready to shoot within three seconds of getting the lens cover open.

Talk about a resolution

In terms of image quality, the Olympus is a sturdy performer. With 4.07 effective megapixels and 3x zoom lens with a focal length of 35mm-105mm (that's the 35mm equivalent), the mju 400 is capable of some truly stunning outdoor results. However, indoor shots are sometimes a little too dark for our liking, which almost certainly owes a lot to the small size of the flash unit. If you're looking to take more than a few photos indoors, you'll need to make sure there's plenty of light around to properly illuminate your subject. Although it's not exactly ideal, this is the price you pay for a compact digital camera like the mju 400.

"THE MJU 400 IS CAPABLE OF FURNISHING YOU WITH TRULY STUNNING OUTDOOR SHOTS"

Storing your pictures on the camera is done using the extra small xD-Picture Card format, which is all the rage at the moment. Although you might think that the last thing we need is another image storage format, xD is rapidly growing in popularity and we reckon it won't be long before this format really takes off. At the moment however, it's lagging



Close-up photography with the mju 400 might only allow you to get as close as 20cm to your subject, but it still gives you some excellent photos. The colour of the green grass in this shot is spot on

behind the more popular MMC/SD cards. You can currently get an xD-Picture Card with a maximum capacity of 512Mb, but this should increase in the near future. Some day, hopefully not too far in the future, digital camera manufacturers might all want to collaborate and

"THERE ISN'T A MORE ATTRACTIVE DIGICAM ON THE MARKET RIGHT NOW"

decide on one format of memory card. Having more than six types of memory card really isn't doing anyone any favours, especially not the end consumers.

Camera settings

Advanced digital photographers might be a little peeved about the lack of aperture or shutter priority modes, but the camera does have a decent range of manual exposure, white balance and ISO settings. Of course, most professional or advanced photographers would plump for either a digital SLR or a compact model such as the Pentax Optio 550, rather than the mju 400.

Closer than close

Only being able to get in as close as 20cm to its subject, it has to be said that the macro mode is a little disappointing. Most digital cameras in a similar price range to the mju 400 manage to get at least twice as near, and there are an increasing number of compacts that now allow for an astonishing 1cm macro focus range.

The LCD viewfinder is big enough to preview and review your shots at 1.5 inches. A little bigger would have been nicer, but the quality of the display itself is top-notch.

If you're after a camera that can withstand the unpredictable British weather, and you also have an eye for style, the mju 400 is definitely worth serious consideration. We don't believe that there's a more attractive camera on the market at the moment.

The price tag of just under £400 is also pretty darn good for a four-megapixel camera with a weatherproof casing, and its snappy design will certainly catch the attention of passers-by.

Despite the great quality of the photos produced by the new Olympus, you will be able to find slightly better by shopping around in the same price range. You're really paying for the looks of this model, but there's no denying that it does indeed look great.

All in all, if you want a camera that can produce some pretty decent photos and you're the type who's always found browsing for new stylish mobile phones and the like, the mju 400 could well be the camera for you. Those after more manual features and slightly better quality images will need to look at models such as the Pentax Optio 550, Nikon Coolpix 5400 or the new Canon PowerShot G5. All of these cost a fair bit more than the mju 400, though. ■

The verdict

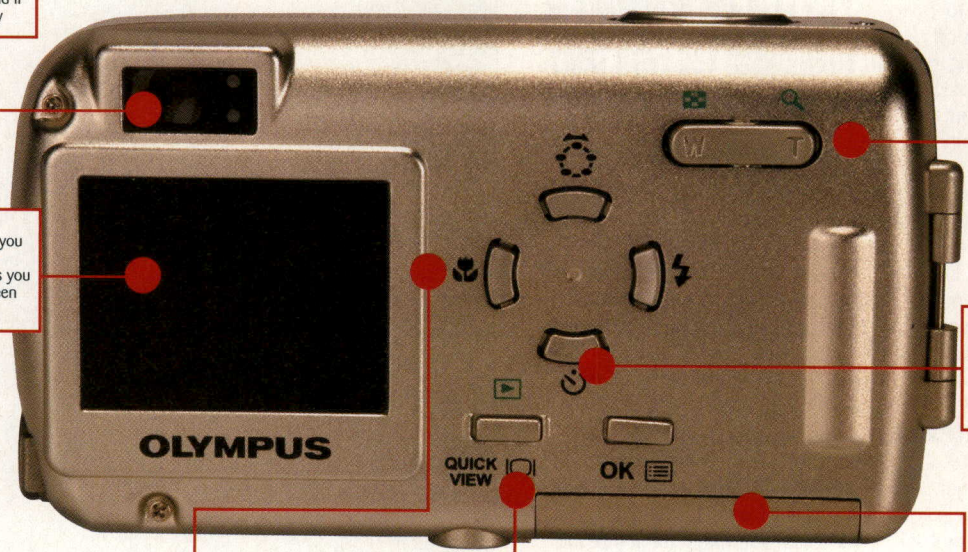
PRODUCT: Olympus mju 400
PRICE: £399
TEL: 0800 0720070
URL: www.olympus.co.uk

FEATURES: ★★★★☆
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★☆
OVERALL **90%**

✔ Takes great photos and looks incredibly stylish to boot!

✖ Lacks advanced features such as aperture and shutter priority

A quick look at the Olympus mju 400



Optical viewfinder
Use this whenever possible to save on battery power. The two indicator lights next to it let you know if the flash is ready and if the lens is focused correctly

LCD viewfinder
This dazzling display allows you to preview and review your photos with ease. It also lets you navigate through the onscreen display quickly and easily

Zoom control
The mju 400 comes with a 3x optical zoom lens, which is controlled using this rocker switch. There's also a 4x digital zoom, but this degrades picture quality somewhat

Timed shutter release
This button puts the shutter on a timed release. However, the supplied remote control will probably be of more use to most people

Macro feature
If you want to do some close-up photography, make sure you hit this macro button. It allows you to get as close as 20cm to your subject

Quick View
Press this button if you want to quickly take a look at the photo you've just taken. It also allows you to review all the other photos that are currently on the memory card

Memory card slot
Like all the other slots and sockets of this camera, the xD-Picture Card slot is completely weatherproof, so it won't mind a bit of light rain

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Easy Password Manager 2.0

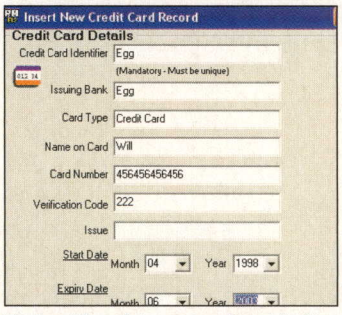
FED UP WITH REMEMBERING ALL YOUR INTERNET PASSWORDS? WHY NOT STORE THEM ALL IN ONE LOCATION?

More and more Web sites these days require you to register with them before you can view their content. The problem with this is that you can end up with a heap of different usernames and passwords, and of course you're always told never to write them down anywhere.

Easy Password Manager version 2.0 attempts to rid you of your password woes by storing them all in one secure database. What's more, it can store multiple user identities so that anyone who uses your PC can have a secure password database.

In order to keep the entire database safe, a master password is assigned to it. Then, whenever you want to access your passwords you simply have to enter your username along with the master password – just make sure you don't forget it!

You'll find that you can also get this utility to automatically sign you into various Web sites with just one click of the mouse button. It won't work on every single Web site login page, but on the whole it gets the job done.



The Form Filler will store your credit card details

Form filler

Easy Password Manager 2.0 also comes with a handy form-filling utility. All you have to do is enter your address, phone number and other personal details into Easy Password Manager, and when it comes to filling out those troublesome online forms you can simply hit the 'Auto fill' button. Easy Password Manager will then examine the form on the particular Web site you're visiting and enter all the relevant details.

If you're a fan of online shopping, you'll be pleased to hear that the Form Filler will also happily store your credit card numbers, expiry dates, etc, meaning that you no longer have to hunt down your wallet each time you make an online purchase. There's also an entry for your PIN number, but we recommend you leave this blank, since banks may not be so quick to refund fraudulent cash withdrawals if they find out you've got your PIN number written down somewhere.

Of course, you do run the risk of someone finding out your master password and gaining access to every single password stored in your database. It's therefore essential that you keep your master password completely to yourself.

Enter your username and password into Easy Password Manager and you're sorted

It has to be said that Easy Password Manager's interface isn't the most attractive we've seen, and the manual and packaging don't inspire confidence. However, we found that it got the job done admirably and, with a little bit of practice, it can certainly save time when it comes to Web site log-ins and form filling.

The easy life

Thankfully, unlike many other similar applications, Easy Password Manager promises not to monitor your Internet activity and won't hassle you with a million pop-ups every second.

All in all, Easy Password Manager 2.0 is a decent enough package that gets the job done. It might not look great, and you may take a while getting used to the interface, but it's certainly something that most Web users could benefit from. You can download a demo version direct from **www.passwordmanager.co.uk** to see it at work for yourself, and if you want to purchase the full version it will set you back £12.99, which is a reasonable price for this type of product. ■

The verdict

PRODUCT: Easy Password Manager 2.0
PRICE: £12.99
TEL: N/A
URL: www.passwordmanager.co.uk

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★
OVERALL **82%**

✔ Gets the job done and saves you time on the Net

✖ Looks a bit amateurish and the interface could be better

iRiver iFP 180T

THE NEXT CONTENDER FOR PORTABLE MP3 PLAYER KING TAKES ITS PLACE IN THE ARENA...

MP3 players are nothing new these days, and a host of different devices have been released in an attempt to wrestle interest away from the big players such as Creative and Archos. So far, most have been unsuccessful, but unperturbed, iRiver has released a range of players in an attempt to do just that.

The one currently on test, the iFP 180T, is a 128Mb device retailing at around £150. It looks attractive enough at first glance, with a sleek silver casing and unconventional prism shape, which is clearly designed to be eye-catching enough to make you look twice. The player is also very light, weighing in at around 50g, so ultra-portability isn't a problem. If you wish, you can use the neck strap provided to secure it about your person, but most people would probably prefer the pocket option.

Pros and cons

Although the 180T looks intriguingly attractive, from a practical perspective users might be a little put off by the three-sided face. It can be annoying having to keep twirling it about trying to find the LCD screen/controls/hold switches, which are situated on different facets. Once you get used to the player this might not be so much of a problem, but it's a small annoyance that could play on the mind of the choosy consumer.

One big difference between this player and many of the others currently available is the welcome presence of a built-in FM radio. This can be extremely handy, and you'll find all the radio functions you'd expect here, such as presets, automatic and manual searching.

There's also a built-in voice recorder with a tiny built-in mic, so it's dead easy to record quick memos to yourself if the need arises. MP3 fans will have 128Mb of storage capacity to play with (although the device is also available in 64 and 256Mb models), which equates to roughly two hours of music.

The device also supports WMA, so you can take advantage of this new format's smaller file size and squeeze a bit extra on it if you're getting short of room. Playback quality is predictably good, and the headphones supplied are high quality and bassy enough to do justice to a range of music genres.

Skipping around is also very simple, thanks largely to the LCD panel, which displays song titles and information according to the ID3 tags stored on the MP3 files themselves.

The device takes a single AA battery, which could last you around 20 hours (probably only with high-capacity cells like Duracell) so this is plenty of time for you to get sick of the music you've put on there.

One negative aspect of the player that has to be mentioned is the battery compartment. The plastic lid that secures the battery in place is not only flimsy enough to raise an eyebrow about its longevity, but springs open far too easily, making you wonder how many times it'll open in your pocket and cut the power to the player.

The bottom line

MP3 players, particularly low-capacity portable models such as this one, are now much of a muchness these days, with very few discernible differences. Sound quality is usually fairly consistent, and features like ultra-portable size and USB connectivity have become the norm recently. If you're in the market for one of these players, your choice is likely to be influenced by price, style and extra features.

In the case of the 180T, the £150 price tag isn't exactly something to balk at, but it is around £40 more expensive than the wildly popular Creative Muvo. However, you are getting a voice recorder, FM radio and an LCD display for easy navigation, so add all this up, put it next to your £40 and make an informed decision. Overall, a feature-filled player that could perhaps have benefited from a slightly lower price tag. ■

The verdict

PRODUCT: iRiver iFP 180T
PRICE: £150
TEL: N/A
URL: www.iriver.com

FEATURES: ★★★★☆
EASE OF USE: ★★★★☆
VALUE: ★★★★☆
OVERALL **80%**

✔ Built-in FM radio, microphone

✖ A little pricey

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Intego Content Barrier

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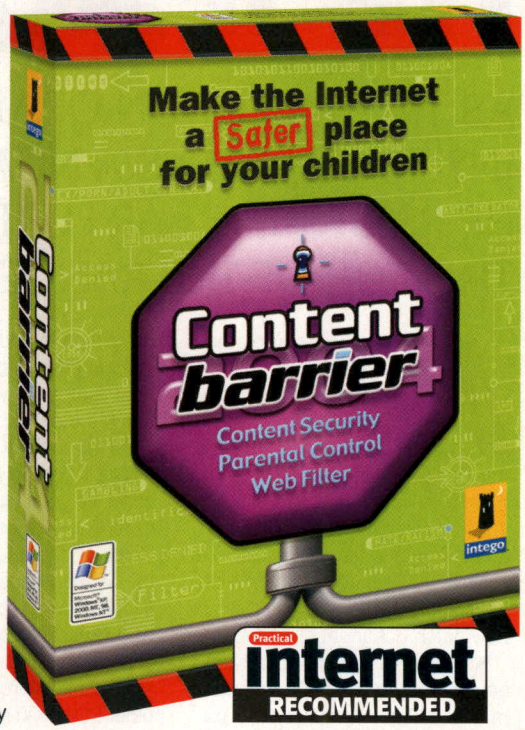


The Internet has come into its own over the last few years, as the furore surrounding issues such as credit card fraud and the risks of shopping online have been all but resolved. More and more families and new users are becoming confident online, with the World Wide Web appearing as more of a necessity than a luxury every day.

This is not to say that the system is flawless, and one of the most common gripes that still exist surrounds the subject of content – namely pornographic, violent and unsuitable Web pages. This is a particular concern if your Internet connection is available to youngsters, and if you have kids in the home that need to use the Web for research or school projects you would understandably want to keep them away from such things. There are a number of options available to help you do this, such as using Internet Explorer's security settings, but one of the most effective is to buy a dedicated application like Intego's Content Barrier software.

This package, designed for use with all versions of Windows, helps you to control exactly what content is available and includes a number of handy tools to help you customise your browsing session exactly as you'd like.

When you first open the package you must create an administrative account which is used to control all of the other users on the system. Password access prevents others from changing settings, after which you can go on to create additional accounts for other members of the family. Filtering options allow you to block all material that might be unsuitable, or select specific categories you wouldn't want that user to be able to access. These include sex/pornography, violence, shopping, chat rooms and MP3s, allowing you to choose exactly what to allow through the barrier at the click of a button.

Direct link

Any potential visits to such sites can be automatically redirected to a Web site of your choice, or simply barred altogether. You can also limit the use of certain search engines and force users to revert to established searches using MSN, Yahoo or other 'clean' searches that automatically block unsuitable material. Schedules can be created to apply filters to certain times of the day, and specific sites can be blocked or allowed by placing them in the appropriate list to enable exceptions to the rule.

In addition to this, you'll find a comprehensive log created of all Web sites visited, a summary of total Internet traffic for downloads and uploads, and email notification which can be turned on to flag email activity if you so wish. The handy anti-predator feature addresses the concerns currently surrounding chat rooms, and the misinformation that can lead unsuspecting users into revealing personal details about themselves. Specific phrases can be searched for and filtered, allowing such activities to be strictly monitored to prevent unwanted contact with other users. As with everything on Content Barrier, all of these settings can be tailored individually for different users, offering a complete and versatile solution to the issues of unwanted content online. ■

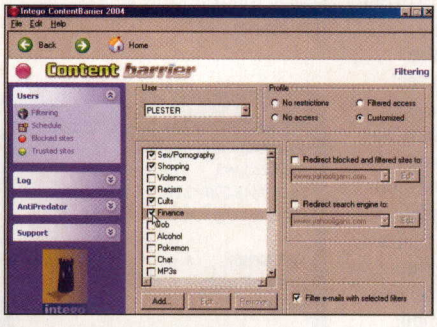
The verdict

PRODUCT: Intego Content Barrier
PRICE: £40
TEL: N/A
URL: www.intego.com

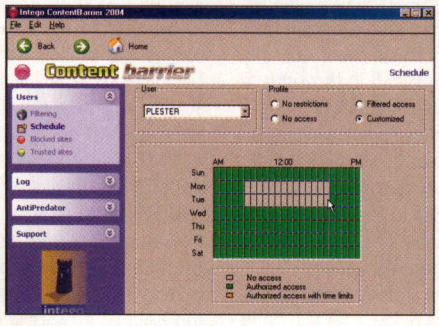
FEATURES: ★★★★☆
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★☆
OVERALL **87%**

✔ Fully customisable, very easy to use, a complete solution for home protection

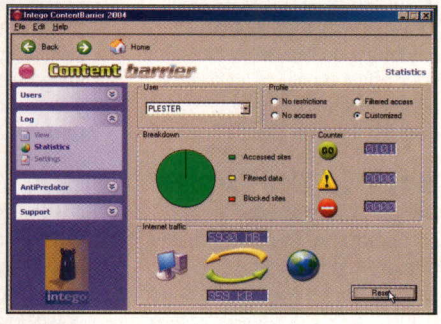
✖ Expensive for what is basically a glamorous filter package



1 Customising
Change the types of content that can be accessed by various users of the system with ease by selecting from the preset categories available from the main window. Each user can have his or her personal barrier settings applied.



2 Scheduling
Create a schedule to allow access to certain types of content at certain times of the day. You can also create a list of allowed or blocked sites to cater for exceptions to the rules you have applied.



3 Logged activity
Using the log feature you can view a list of all Web sites visited at certain times, along with a summary of Internet content that has been downloaded or uploaded to Web sites. This allows you to double-check all activity.

HP iPAQ h5550

Practical internet RECOMMENDED

AS THE EVOLUTION OF MOBILE INTERNET ENTERS A NEW CHAPTER, HP RAISES THE BAR FURTHER WITH THIS TOP-OF-THE-RANGE PDA

A few years back, the biggest task a handheld computer could perform was to add up a few numbers or simulate a gorilla rolling barrels down some scaffolding. These days things have moved on somewhat, and it's now possible to access the Web and send email in full colour, thanks to today's smart new batch of handheld devices.

Keen to get a foothold in every echelon of the palmtop computer market, HP has conjured up three new iPAQs at the entry level, middle and top ends of the spectrum. Costing a fraction under 500 notes, you can probably guess that the h5550 sits very much at the upper end of this scale, with an impressive set of specifications to match its price tag.

Aside from the standard tools we've come to expect from a PDA, the new iPAQ comes with a number of features that'll make you remember why 21st Century living was supposed to be so good. In terms of wireless connectivity, the h5550 embraces both Bluetooth and 802.11 as standard. Each can be turned on or off separately, allowing you to do just about anything you like, from checking your office email via a wireless hotspot to browsing WAP sites through your mobile phone.

Back to the future

Designed very much with the corporate user in mind, the iPAQ's primary security feature comes straight from the set of *Total Recall*. Using a slickly designed piece of hardware beneath the navigation button, HP has included fingerprint recognition technology for only the second time on one of its devices. Better still, it actually works, combining with the password protection in Pocket PC, or independently, to ensure that it's only your grubby mitts that can touch the device.

All this technological muscle-flexing is probably enough to convince you that your £500 is going towards a pretty decent product. However, there's plenty more to the h5550 than just a few nifty bits of gadgetry. Most notable is the whopping 128Mb of SD RAM sitting aboard the device, which is significantly more than virtually all other PDAs can manage straight out of the box. There's also an SD card for pumping up the memory still further if you just can't get enough of those tasty upgrades. And as if to prove that this PDA will accept nothing but the best components, the device comes with an Intel XScale processor running at 400MHz, making it a very nippy performer.

As with the rest of the iPAQ range, the h5550's display is crystal clear and at 3.8 inches diagonally across, is the largest you'll find on a Pocket PC at the moment. It's also trans-reflective, making it adequately visible in a range of different lighting conditions.

The h5550 comes with a decent range of software including the task-switching utility iTask, the iPAQ Image Viewer for leafing through your digital images, and iPAQ Backup. This latter application can make use of up to 20Mb of ROM for making power-outage safe backups, or send your data to an SD card. What's more, it can be set to automatically make backups at scheduled times and when the battery power level gets below a certain point.

Soft cell

On the subject of battery life, the h5550 doesn't quite have the staying power of many of its rival Pocket PCs. While the manufacturer claims that the cell lasts 12 hours, in our rigorous tests we managed to squeeze slightly less than three hours from it. Admittedly we were really caning the device, setting the backlight to stay at its brightest setting and pushing the speaker volume right up. We then blasted out MP3s relentlessly, getting continuous playback for one hour and 55 minutes, with complete power shutdown after two hours 55 minutes. Nevertheless, the battery is removable and you can get hold of a spare if you think you'll be using it in the same self-indulgent manner as we did.

With its impressive wireless connectivity functionality and nifty security features, this is a serious PDA for serious users. Unfortunately that means it comes with a serious price tag, although if you have the cash to spare, the h5550 is well worth the money. ■

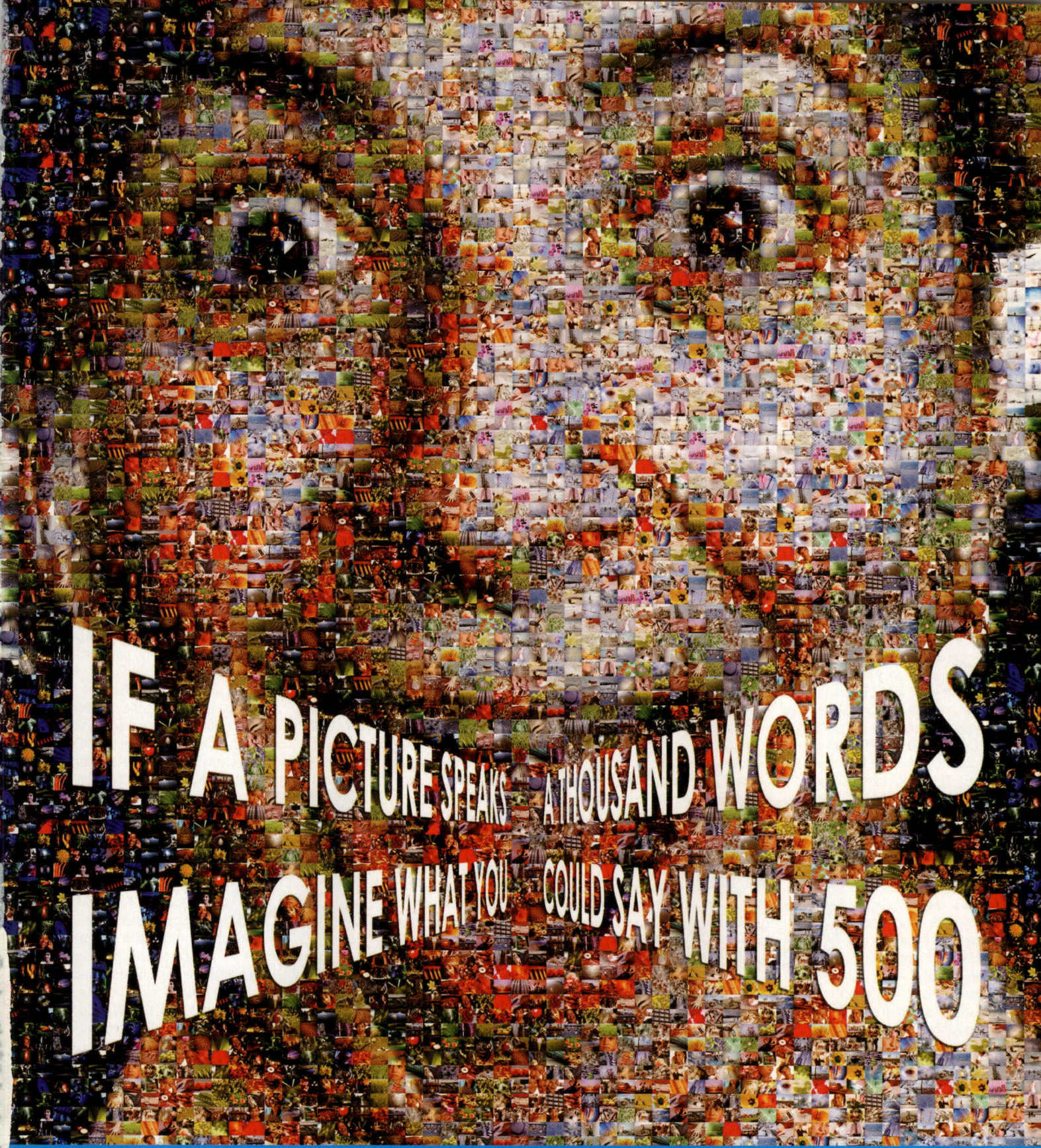
The verdict

PRODUCT: HP iPAQ h5550
PRICE: £499
TEL: 0845 270 4222
URL: www.hp.co.uk

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★★½
OVERALL **88%**

✔ Packed with two wireless connectivity options, a fast processor and heaps of features

✖ Not surprisingly, battery life isn't the greatest



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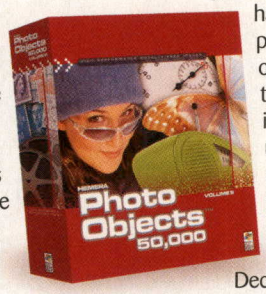
Hemera Photo Objects 50,000 Volume 3

NEVER GET CAUGHT WITHOUT THAT PERFECT IMAGE AGAIN, WITH THIS SIMPLY WHOPPING BUNDLE OF RAZOR-SHARP STILLS FROM HEMERA

A picture is worth a thousand words, or so they say. Hemera's latest instalment in its Photo Objects range could even coin the phrase 'Seven CDs can hold 50,000 pictures' – because that's essentially what it does. This is no-nonsense software at its very best, and for that very reason you cannot help but be impressed with the incredible library of images this product offers. Digital cameras may be common these days, but there's clearly still a need for the kind of hi-resolution eye candy that's on display here. With over 80 categories, spanning vases to butterflies, the amazing plethora of photos could easily find good use domestically or professionally. You might be keen to jazz up a document, a presentation or your very own home page, while graphic designers will be in pixelated heaven. The important royalty-free aspect will immediately be appreciated by professionals, and should give anyone the freedom to distribute their resulting compositions.



Snap happy

The real hub of Photo Objects is the 'GraphicsDesk' interface that you use to browse the library. Installation of the program takes a couple of minutes, presumably while all the thumbnail previews are stored locally, and then you're free to get browsing. There are multiple windows for viewing the pictures, with little more than a collection list and search bar. You can integrate previous volumes in the series and visit online galleries, although this could prove quite frustrating. You soon get a bit cheesed off with having to interchange CDs pretty much constantly to open a photo. Obviously this can't be helped, but it could result in many users feeling overwhelmed. That said, the images are beautiful and you cannot help but gasp at the reams of Art Deco furniture, scientific equipment and, yes, Hawaiian shirts. All the shots are superb and you get about forty versions of each object in different styles or angles. Exporting is also made simple via a dialog that lets you edit size and colours before dragging the image into an application or copying to the clipboard. ■

The verdict

PRODUCT: Hemera Photo Objects 50,000 Volume 3
PRICE: £70
TEL: N/A
URL: www.hemera.com

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★
OVERALL 84%

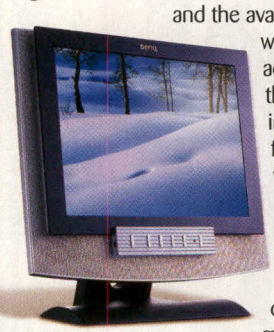
✔ Vast choice of top quality photos that are easily searched and exported

✖ Continual swapping of multiple CDs could frustrate casual users

BenQ FP591 15" LCD Monitor

IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET SQUARE EYES, WE TAKE A REALLY CLOSE LOOK AT ONE OF THE FUNKIEST LOOKING MONITORS AROUND

Where would we be without monitors? Well, we wouldn't be able to see what was happening on the desktop for one thing. There wouldn't even be a GUI, as there'd be little point. In fact, early computers used to convey their visual output through a set of blinking LEDs. Luckily the 'good old days' are long gone and today we're bombarded with new flashy screens to gaze into. The current trend in sleek, flat, plasma displays seems to have migrated from the TV market as the two mediums converge.



BenQ's new FP591 is a 15" liquid crystal display, and forms part of the manufacturer's 'Jewel Series'. Apart from being flat, the screen is framed in chic black and silver mesh, accompanied by a metallic panel of buttons. It certainly cuts a fine shape when out of its box, but promises much more once connected.

Motion pictures

When you unpack the BenQ, it can be worrying to find a whole host of different leads. You probably will need to consult the rather skinny user guide as you fathom out what goes where. Ultimately, the power cord, sound and video cables are the most vital for getting things going. You're instructed to feed everything into their horizontal sockets through a hole in the back of the stand, which isn't easy. The process is fiddly and awkward, so design marks did take a tumble here. Desktop resolution and frequency had to be set to 1024x768 at 60Hz to get the range, but after that we had no problem – even the factory settings yield pinpoint clarity. These can be improved by installing the supplied drivers or manually tweaked with the stylish touch-sensitive controls. It's also a standard size for TV viewing and the available tuner card would make a nice addition. Importantly, the device also includes a 'photo frame' drive in the top which will read Compact Flash and Smart media. The image data can then be cleverly previewed onscreen via the main menu. Sound output is impressive too, with the patented SRSR technology delivering faithful surround sound.

All these features make the FP591 an excellent proposition with a great build and superb visuals across multiple applications. ■

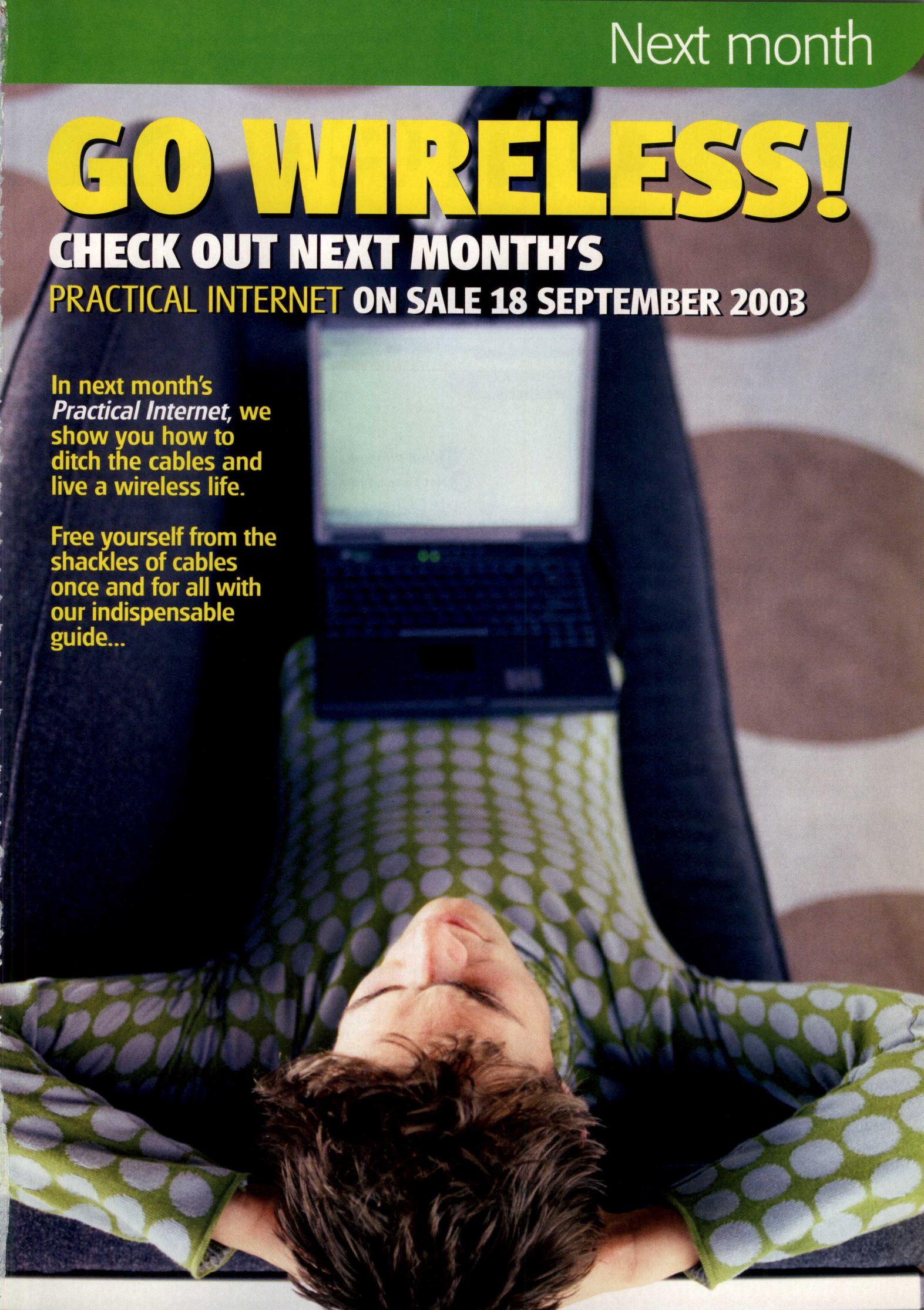
The verdict

PRODUCT: BenQ FP591 15" LCD Monitor
PRICE: £399
TEL: 01442 301000
URL: www.benq.co.uk

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★★
OVERALL 82%

✔ Innovative touches and stark design complement a vibrant, vivid display

✖ Awkward connections disappoint; smaller scale could put people off



GO WIRELESS!

CHECK OUT NEXT MONTH'S PRACTICAL INTERNET ON SALE 18 SEPTEMBER 2003

In next month's *Practical Internet*, we show you how to ditch the cables and live a wireless life.

Free yourself from the shackles of cables once and for all with our indispensable guide...

CD contents

Welcome...

IF YOU HAD a fancy fast car, would you get the bus to work every morning? I wouldn't think so, yet many of us are still content to use a fast broadband account as if we were wading through Internet treacle. That's all about to stop, though, with our immense collection of Net timesavers.

We've scoured all the nooks and crannies of the Net to find you the best programs to save you valuable browsing time. Everybody should find at least a couple of tools within our huge 30-strong collection to tickle their time-saving fancy.

Even if you're not hell-bent on saving time (and you should be), we've got plenty of other stuff to keep you happy this month. Check out our three full versions, and a cool collection of image-editing tools. Enjoy!

Matt Budd, Multimedia Editor
mattb@paragon.co.uk

How to use the disc

The minimum recommended specification to run the *Practical Internet* CD is 800 X 600 screen resolution, 32Mb RAM, 16-bit colour, Windows 95/98/Me, Intel Pentium or compatible P166. We recommend that all users shut down all other applications while running the CD.

The CD will autorun in Windows 95/98. For users without autorun enabled go to the Start menu, select RUN and then type d:\PracticalInternet.exe (replacing 'd' with the letter of your CD drive) and press 'Return'.

Damaged discs
We will be pleased to replace any CD that is cracked, scratched or snapped upon purchase. Return them to the following address: Cover Disc Returns, Paragon Publishing, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS. If you experience technical problems, not due to physical damage on the CD, please DO NOT return any discs to us unless requested by the support team.

Missing discs
If you have purchased the magazine and have not received your CD, we will be happy to send you a replacement disc. Email **subs@paragon.co.uk** quoting the magazine and issue number, along with your full postal address and daytime phone number.

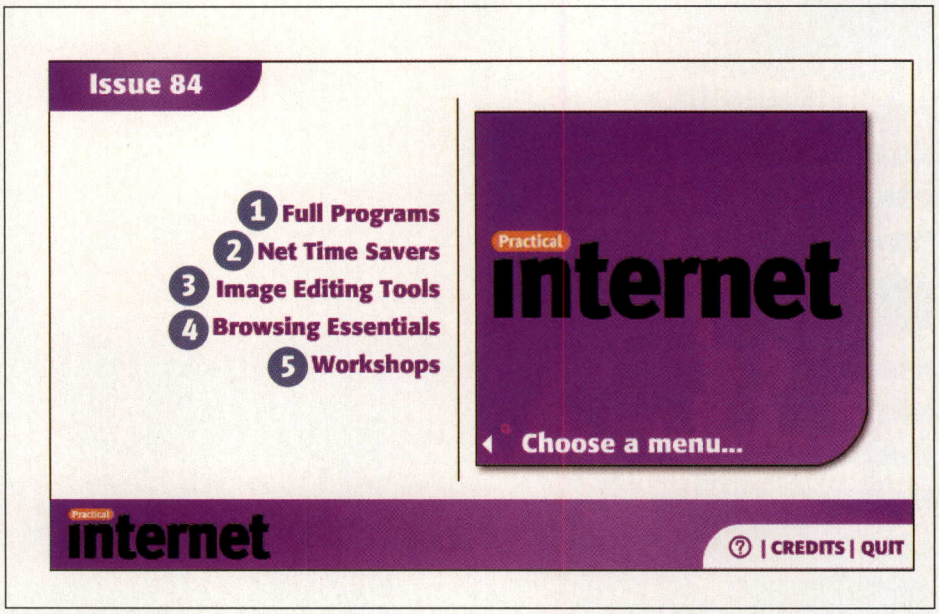
Problems using the disc
If you encounter problems using the CD or installing the software you can email **cdhelp@paragon.co.uk**. Questions will be answered twice daily. Please provide us with as much information about the technical specifications of your machine and the software errors you are receiving as well as quoting the magazine and issue number in your email. Our helpdesk team will be taking calls about disc installation problems on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 6pm. Phone **01202 200259**.

NOTE: This service can only deal with problems when installing software from our CDs. Issues surrounding the use and purchase of software and all ISP queries must be referred to the relevant software publisher, merchant or ISP. Please note that we do not support Windows 3.1/ Windows 95/ Windows NT or Windows 2000 Operating Systems.

The CD logo

Look out for this logo in the magazine. It tells you which of the programs mentioned in features, or explored in tutorials, are on the *Practical Internet* cover CD-ROM.

On the CD this month...



1 FULL PROGRAMS

PhotoPlus 5.0
Trellian WebPage 1
WebSpy Analyser 1.0

Three cool programs to let you create stunning graphics, edit your Web pages and check what's going on in your network.

2 BROWSING

Acrobat Reader 6.0 Download
Accelerator Plus 5.3
Eudora 5.2
KaZaA Media Desktop 2
Netscape 7.02
Opera 6.04
Shockwave Player 8
Spyware Blaster
ZoneAlarm

Get on top of your browsing world thanks to our collection of must-have tools and utilities. In fact, this miniature compendium should have everything you ever need to take full control of your browsing. It's well worth checking out corkers like Spyware Blaster and Eudora 5.2.

3 IMAGE-EDITING TOOLS

ACDSee 5.0.1
Banner Maker Pro 5.0
CryptaPix 2.23
Easy Thumbnails 2.6
Fireworks MX
Flash MX
Freehand MX
Irfanview 3.8
Mihov Gallery Creator 0.9.2
MyAlbum 2.0
PhotoCleaner 1.3
RedEye 1.4
ScreenHunter 4.0

Got a problem with your digital images that Boots can't fix? Fret no longer, for we've rounded up some of the best image-editing applications available to give you a taste of digital photo perfection. Once you've tried out some of the tools here, you'll never look back.

4 INTERNET TIMESAVERS

12Ghosts Popup Killer
Acumen QuikSMS 1.0.505
AI RoboForm 5.2.9
AI Studio Watznew 1.9.5
AimingClick
Alexa
Anti-Boss Key 3.0
Ashampoo WinOptimizer Suite 1.325
Avast! 4 Home Edition
Booky for Windows 1.1.4
Download Accelerator Plus 5.3
Dynamic Submission 7.0
ePrompter 2.0
FasNet Connection Accelerator
Girafa 2.08
HammerSnipe PowerTool 1.2
iSystem Wiper 2.2
iOpus Internet Macros 3.73
Irfanview 3.8
ISYS Hindsite 5.0
Junkmuncher 1.4.79
KaZaA Speedup 3.05
Mihov Gallery Creator 0.9.2
MouseOver Button Wizard 2.2
NavMenu 1.0
NewsBin Pro 4.1
Opera 6.04
RapidBrowser Stealth Edition 3.0
Text2html 1.30
TweakIE 3.1
WebCopier 3.4
WebTranslator 3.0
WebWasher 2.21
WinZip 8.1

Save yourself time with our bumper collection of amazing tools designed specifically for that purpose. From browser add-ons like Girafa 2.08 and TweakIE 3.1 through to all-in-one apps like Opera and Irfanview, this is your one-stop shop for speedier Net operations.

5 WORKSHOPS

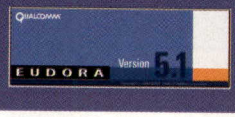
Adobe Acrobat 6.0
ASP workshop files
Dreamweaver MX
Dreamweaver workshop files
iOpus Internet Macros 3.73
NewsBin Pro 4.1
PHP workshop files

A small but perfectly formed collection of programs and files to help you get to grips with our great workshop sections. As well as trials of programs like Dreamweaver MX and iOpus Internet Macros, you'll also find key files to help you get started in our Web design tutorials.

Try these

Flash MX, Trial
Widely acknowledged to be everyone's favourite Net creation tool, Flash MX affords you the kind of power that only professionals should be allowed to have.

Eudora 5.2, Adware
If you're tired of having to watch out for viruses and more in Outlook Express, turn to Eudora 5.2 for salvation. Not only is it safer, but it's more fun to boot, with the Chillies feature a bonus.



Dreamweaver MX, Trial
Harness the power of the most impressive WYSIWYG designer we've ever clapped eyes on, and get ready to create like you've never created before.

Trellian WebPage

DESIGNING AND CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE HOME PAGE IS NOW SO EASY WITH THIS TIDY AND INTUITIVE PACKAGE

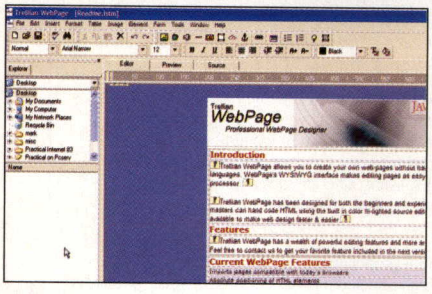
IT'S FUNNY HOW some application types produce big packages that everybody uses, while the rest of the market is ignored. Granted, Dreamweaver MX rules the Web design roost because it's a superb professional tool – but that doesn't mean anyone should be sniffy about the less well known varieties.

That's why we're giving away Trellian's highly impressive WebPage package on this month's CD. On first inspection it actually looks reminiscent of another popular equivalent, HomeSite – its well-designed and organised interface yields all the functionality you'll need. The drag-and-drop WYSIWYG display means that having to learn any code is unnecessary, although an effective HTML and JavaScript editor is available for advanced users. In fact, the working area is one of WebPage's highlights, utilising a clever set of tabbed windows for designing, coding and previewing. What's more, additional features such as the integrated document spellchecker and Photoshop plug-in support really help to elevate it above the crowd.

It's also possible for you to shortcut all the complicated and time-consuming tasks required to build a site from scratch. If you already know of an example URL that you admire, the software's superb page importer will load an entire site for tweaking. This way you'll be able to achieve a polished result in no time and learn a thing or two about how the professionals do it. Plus your proud creations should also get their fair share of visitors, thanks to the excellent meta tag editor that is also included.

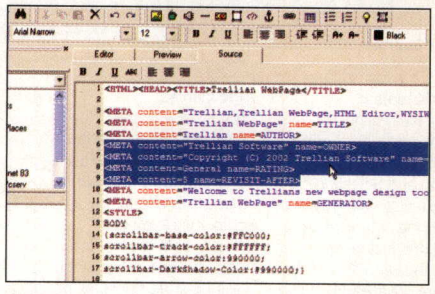
The version of WebPage on the CD is actually a trial version that needs to be unlocked. You will therefore need to visit **www.guildsoft.co.uk/cmp/308GUPIN1** to obtain a serial number that can easily be entered into the program on startup. Here you'll also find a great special offer to upgrade to the full Trellian Internet Studio package.

What you can achieve with WebPage



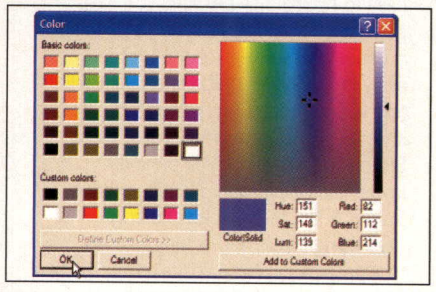
1 Face to face

The main interface is arranged around a set of panels and windows. The left column gives you access to all your project files, while the main area is where you design pages.



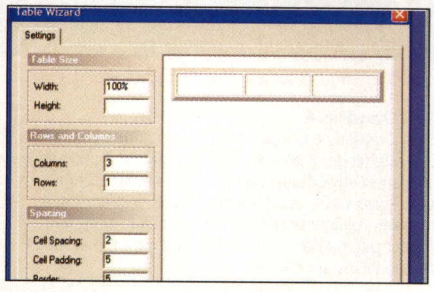
2 Code view

It's easy for the HTML-savvy author to get their hands dirty. You can view and edit raw code by clicking the 'Source' tab, while any changes made can be previewed by clicking 'Preview'.



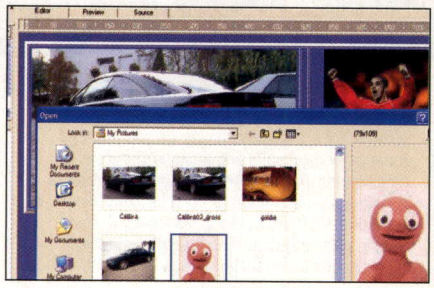
3 Colour me good

Click the 'Page Colour' button on the main toolbar to bring up a background colour palette dialog. You can also alter font colours, giving you the colour scheme of your dreams.



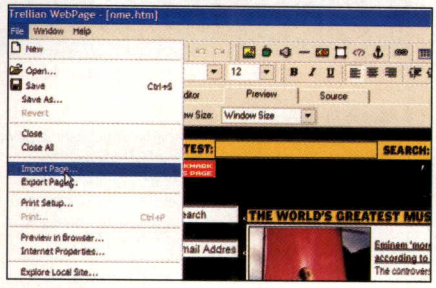
4 Table a motion

To insert a table, enter amounts for specifying columns and rows. The table dialog also has options for defining cell spacing and padding, while offering a preview of the object.



5 Picture this

Position the cursor where you want to place your picture and click the 'Insert Image' button. Find the file you want to load from the dialog and alter its size in the Design window.



6 Importer

Select 'Import Page' from the File menu to import a site from a URL. Enter the address and specify where the files will be stored. WebPage will then open the site for editing.

CD contents

CD highlights

Serif PhotoPlus 5

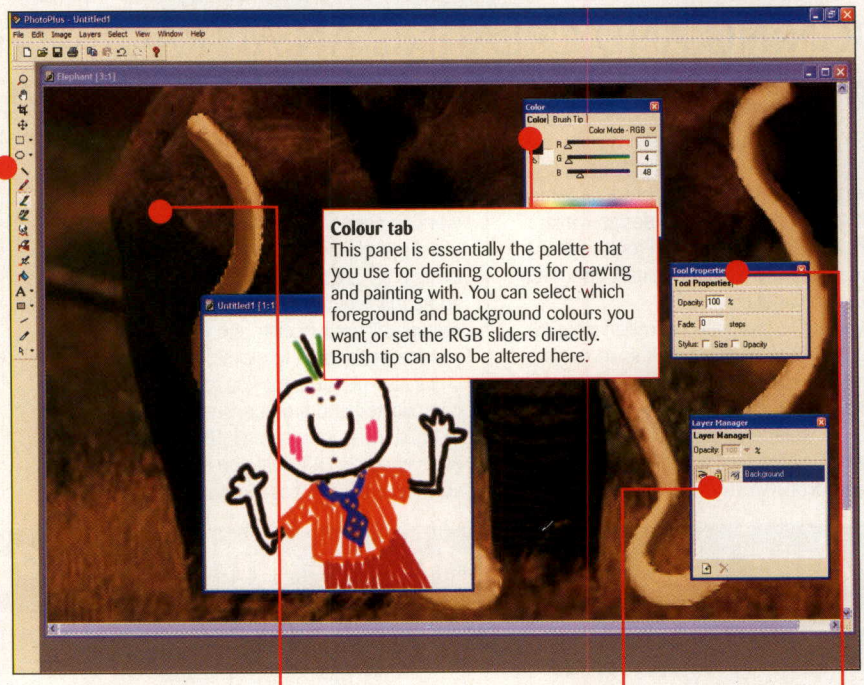
FULLY-WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £50

CREATE AMAZING GRAPHICS AT THE DROP OF A HAT WITH THIS FULL VERSION OF SERIF'S FANTASTIC IMAGE-EDITING PACKAGE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to get into digital imagery or maybe hoping to upgrade from your current drawing and painter, you'll find no better option than Serif's PhotoPlus. We were already impressed with its vector-based equivalent DrawPlus when we gave it away on last month's CD, and we're sure you'll love this one too. Full of powerful tools for editing high resolution photos and images, it's also well geared towards a number of graphical purposes. Naturally the production of attractive 2D pictures for printing is covered, but multimedia efforts are also supplemented with animation capabilities. Dynamic GIFs can be imported or exported for adding to your site, while a built-in facility will actually automatically compile complete animations for you. Cleverly, the Web support continues with an integrated image map editor that should help to get all your hotspots covered in no time.

Perhaps most importantly, the interface has been designed to be as easy to navigate as possible. The many general freehand tools such as pencils, brushes and spray cans are tucked away in dockable toolbars to maintain a tidy space. It certainly shares a similar style to previous incarnations of Paint Shop Pro, so fans of that particular layout will be pleased. Floating panels hold palettes for selecting colour, organising layers and setting various tool properties also. What's more, the software comes brimming with professional samples and wizards to show you exactly what can be done and how to do it.

FIND YOUR WAY AROUND PHOTOPLUS 5



Colour tab
This panel is essentially the palette that you use for defining colours for drawing and painting with. You can select which foreground and background colours you want or set the RGB sliders directly. Brush tip can also be altered here.

Tools toolbar
This main panel contains general editing tools such as Zoom, Crop and Selection. You'll also find great drawing and painting options including brushes and fills, while more advanced features like image map creators and instant shapes are a nice addition.

The canvas
Here is where you'll load images for manipulation or create new works from scratch. The background can be filled with any colour and you can simply doodle straight onto this area. Layers can also be added to stack or mask drawn elements.

Layer manager
Keeping track of all your working surfaces can be confusing when working with layers. PhotoPlus solves the problem with this handy panel, listing all created layers so they are easily toggled on or off.

Tool properties
Each selected tool has a series of specific properties that define the way they work. For example, the Paintbrush tool has settings for opacity levels, fade and stylus. When no tool is selected this panel is empty.

Special reader offers direct from Serif

For more information on this and other fantastic Serif offers, please call: 0800 376 7070 quoting code: RO/PI/PH5/0803 Offer expires 21 September 2003

Serif PagePlus 8
Serif PagePlus 8 sets new standards in publishing power. Whether you are a designer or a DTP novice, this program has all you need to create top-quality pages. Features include multiple top-level interface, intelligent QuickShapes and rotating text frames, customisable toolbars, graduated fills, transparency effects and enhanced line drawing.

SERIF PAGEPLUS 8
(including Program CD, Design CD and Manual)
£59.99 (List price £79.99) Save £20

Serif PhotoPlus 8
Serif PhotoPlus 8 allows you to create, edit and enhance photographs and images. Let your imagination run riot using a multitude of features, including a powerful image browser, automatic image extraction, instant photo frames, funky warping effects, picture brushes, animations, editable QuickShapes and a range of high-end creative tools.

SERIF PHOTOPLUS 8
(including Program CD, Design CD and Manual)
£59.99 (List price £79.99) Save £20

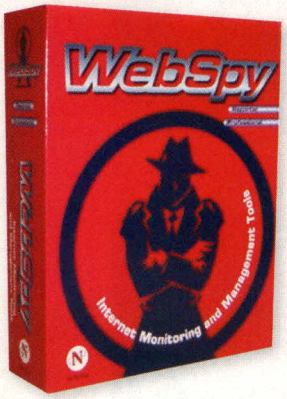
Serif DrawPlus 6
Serif DrawPlus 6 is a powerful drawing utility with an amazing range of enhancements. Features include an animation powerhouse, artistic text, a replicate tool, multi-page views, shadows and bevels, a studio page manager, picture borders, inline graphics, multiple master pages and fills. The accompanying CD includes additional instant effects.

SERIF DRAWPLUS 6
(including Program CD, Design CD and Manual)
£59.99 (List price £79.99) Save £20

SAVE £20 OR ALL 3 PRODUCTS: PAGEPLUS 8, PHOTOPLUS 8 AND DRAWPLUS 6 INCLUDING PROGRAM CDs, DESIGN CDs AND MANUALS
FOR JUST £99.95 – AN AMAZING SAVING OF ALMOST £80!

Also on this month's CD

CHECK OUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOUR NETWORK, EDIT YOUR IMAGES TO PERFECTION AND A WHOLE LOT MORE IN THIS MONTH'S SUPERB PACKED COVER DISC

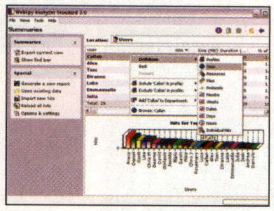


WEBSPY ANALYSER STANDARD 1.0

MONITOR ALL INTERNET ACTIVITY AS IT HAPPENS WITH THIS POWERFUL SERVER SPY

IF YOU'VE EVER had an inkling that your Internet connection is being misused, it could be time to get monitoring. Organisations are all too often finding that their staff are using their online connections for 'recreational' purposes, and software like WebSpy is used to stamp it out. It supports many firewall and proxy server applications, allowing you to import log files to compile reports. Here you can begin to investigate all areas of Internet usage, with implications for improving bandwidth and security. In addition to hunting down foul play, you can actually outline those users who utilise the network most effectively and distribute reports in a multitude of formats. These can even be personalised by substituting IP addresses for user names.

With a whole stack of features, WebSpy is an impressive proposition, although you will need to register our version to unlock it. Simply email the people at **support@webspy.com** with 'Practical Internet' as the subject and you'll receive a valid serial number for free.



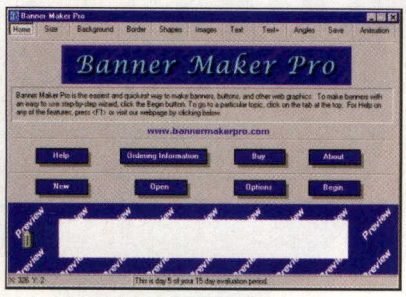
Keep tabs on what people are up to with the excellent WebSpy

Image-editing special

BANNER MAKER PRO 5.0

SHAREWARE, 3.3MB

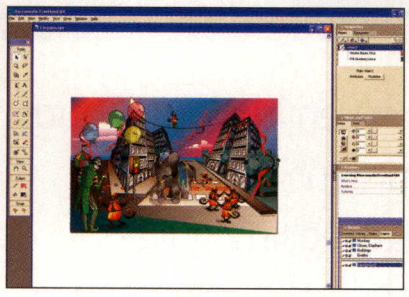
WHILE MANY WILL tell you that banner ads are one of the Web's many curses, there's no disputing the fact that they can drive visitors to your site. For every person that looks at a banner advert and gets the red mist, there will be someone who'll click on it out of a genuine interest in what it's promoting, especially if it's been well designed. One of the quickest and easiest ways to conjure up successful banners is to install Banner Maker Pro. The program enables you to create professional looking banners, buttons and graphics for Web pages. Thanks to the simple-to-use tabs at the top of the interface, you can knock up a decent banner ad in just a few minutes.



FREEHAND MX

30-DAY TRIAL

YOU DON'T NEED to be Rolf Harris to create professional online graphics, and there are many programs out there that'll help bring your creativity to the Web. One of the most powerful you'll find anywhere is Freehand MX, which provides everything you need to move through the entire production process, including concept, design, production and publishing, all while working within a single document. As a result of its powerful tools such as Multiple Attributes, Object Panel and Live Effects you can reduce production time, repurpose content for the Net, conjure up Flash content and much more.



Editorial notes

IT IS ADVISED TO INSTALL ONE ANTI-VIRUS PROGRAM AT A TIME, THEN UNINSTALL IT BEFORE TRYING ANOTHER

Beta notice
Users should be aware that any software on this disc noted as being in 'Beta' should only be installed by experienced users. Beta software is in its development stages and may cause damage to your PC configuration and files. It is provided on our CD for you to test and report back any bugs to the software developers

Avast! 4 Home Edition
Avast! Home Edition is free for home/non-commercial use only. Please register to receive a free licence key. Users can evaluate Avast! Professional Edition for up to 60 days and then purchase it

Webspy Analyser 1.0
To obtain the serial key, please write to **support@webspy.com** with 'Practical Internet' in the subject line. You will then receive a serial key to unlock the software within 24 hours

Trellian WebPage 1.0
Follow the onscreen instructions to register the product and unlock the fully-working version

Quick SMS
Windows XP only

Antiboss Key
If the program is not listed in your Start menu, you'll find it on your hard drive (default C:\) in 'Program files\abk'. Not Windows XP compatible

ilSystem Wiper 2.2
Open the help files from the Start menu and follow this path: Start>programs>ilsystemwiper>help and click on 'Common errors' to find out how to resolve any errors you may encounter. Not compatible with Windows XP

iOpus Internet Macros
When starting the program, the splash screen gives you two options. The Macros browser is part of the PRO edition and will not function in this demo

Junkmuncher
Will only run on Windows 98 SE onwards

KaZaA Speedup & KaZaA Media Desktop
Internet connection required for installation

Navmenu
Needs an Internet connection during installation

RapidBrowser
Will only run on Windows 98 SE onwards

TweakIE
Requires a restart to run program after installation. May not run on Windows 98 First Edition

WebCopier 3.4
Needs an Internet connection during installation

Easy Thumbnails
Needs an Internet connection during installation

PhotoPlus 5.0
To unlock the full product, click 'Help', 'Registration Wizard' and follow the instructions. You must do this within 30 days

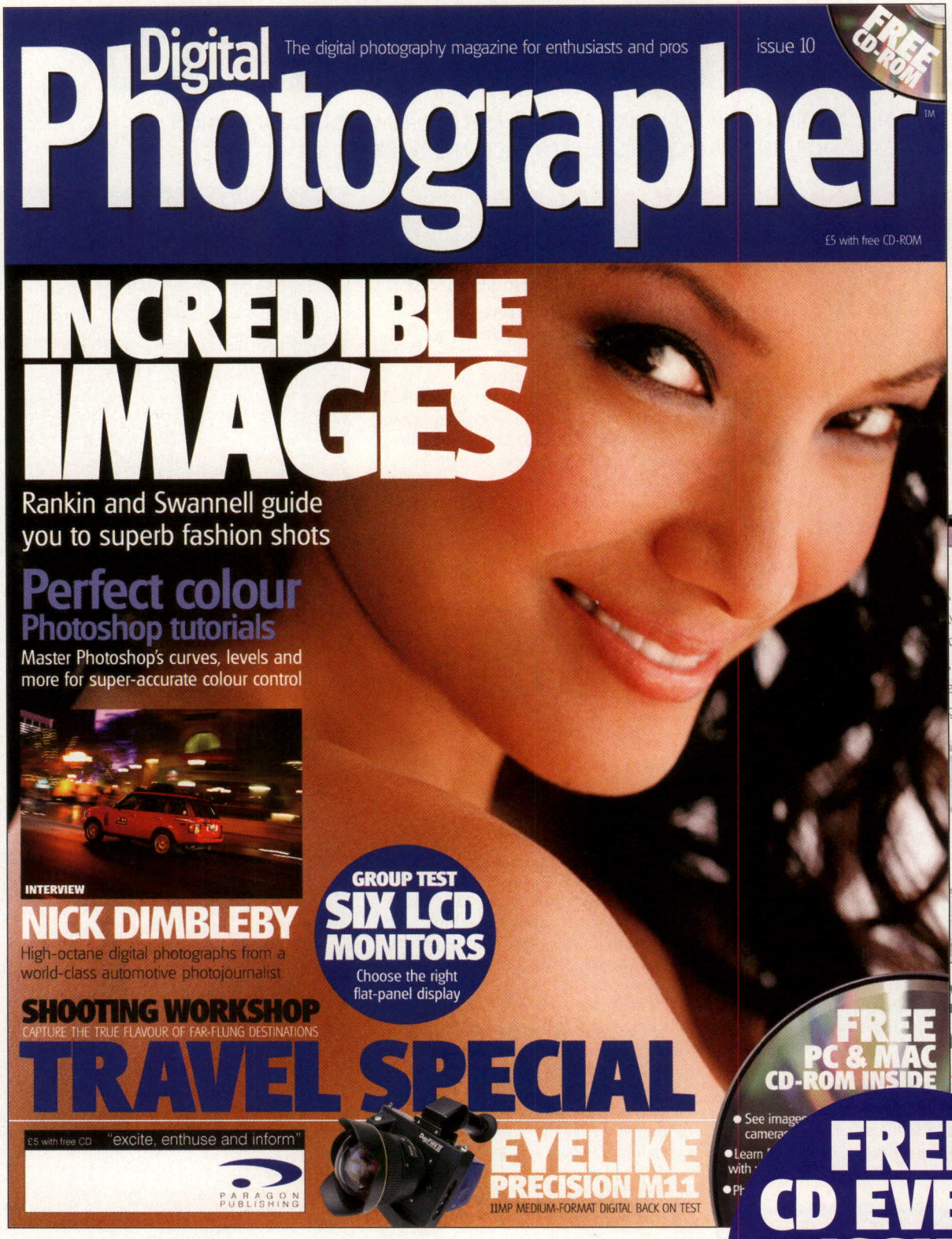
Adobe Acrobat Reader 6.0
Not supported by Windows 98 First Edition

ACDSee 5
Needs an Internet connection during installation

Alexa
This is a download link. Internet connection required

ON SALE 10 JULY

Available from all good newsagents, or call for a copy direct on 01202 200200


Digital Photographer
The digital photography magazine for enthusiasts and pros
issue 10
FREE CD-ROM
£5 with free CD-ROM
INCREDIBLE IMAGES
Rankin and Swannell guide you to superb fashion shots
Perfect colour
Photoshop tutorials
Master Photoshop's curves, levels and more for super-accurate colour control
INTERVIEW
NICK DIMBLEBY
High-octane digital photographs from a world-class automotive photojournalist
GROUP TEST
SIX LCD MONITORS
Choose the right flat-panel display
SHOOTING WORKSHOP
CAPTURE THE TRUE FLAVOUR OF FAR-FLUNG DESTINATIONS
TRAVEL SPECIAL
£5 with free CD
"excite, enthuse and inform"
PARAGON PUBLISHING
EYELIKE PRECISION M11
11MP MEDIUM-FORMAT DIGITAL BACK ON TEST
FREE PC & MAC CD-ROM INSIDE

- The mag for digital imaging enthusiasts & pros
- Packed with quality equipment reviews
- Expert shooting and image-editing guides
- DP is a must-buy for all serious photographers

FREE CD EVERY ISSUE

Try out the best digital photo software and see sample shots from every camera on test

Completely FREE* 180 hour trial of AOL and the Internet

Introducing all-new AOL 8.0

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Over 35 million people worldwide have already chosen AOL, making it the World's number one online service. Discover for yourself why with your FREE 180 hour AOL trial. AOL is a fun, affordable, easy to use information service covering everything from the latest News & Sports to Travel & Entertainment, so use your FREE trial today and see what you've been missing. AOL version 8.0 – more features, more fun, more for you.

When you sign up for your FREE AOL trial by using your free CD, you will be using our latest version of software, AOL 8.0. This software is packed with new and exciting features, including software to block unwanted email and web pop-up ads. And it also introduces our new AOL Music channel, which allows you to listen to music and watch videos from your favourite artists. You can also tune into our online radio and access Sessions@AOL for performances and interviews with the hottest new artists and biggest names in music – totally exclusive to AOL. These features are in addition to the existing unique AOL tools, such as Keyword shortcuts, Chat and Instant Messages, that make finding your way around the Internet and communicating much easier and more enjoyable.

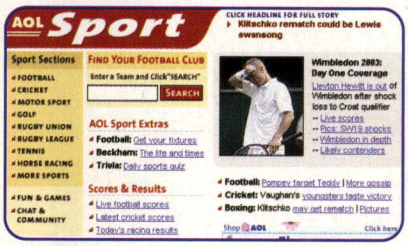
*Your 180-hour FREE trial offer requires credit card or bank details and must be used within your first month online, after which subsequent charges apply. Offer may vary. Call free on 0800 376 5432 or see online for further information. Offer not available to existing AOL members.
** Flat Rate available to BT, NTL, Telewest (including Eurobell) customers only.

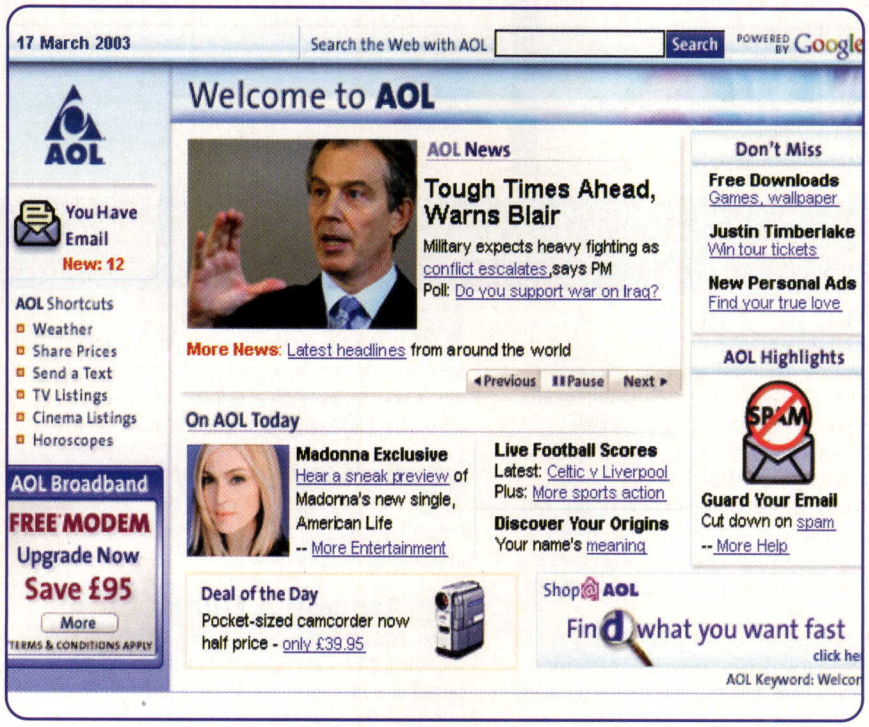
Great value

AOL gives you more for your money than many other providers. Our Flat Rate** monthly price plan includes all Internet call charges. AOL also provides you access to 24 exclusive content channels, seven unique email addresses, a FREE helpline, and is loaded with lots of smart features that helps you get the best from the Internet.

Plus FREE Member and Technical Helplines

Whether you have technical problems or have a query with your account, we are here for you. Call us on our FREEPHONE Member helpline seven days a week on 0800 376 5432. The Internet can be a confusing place so why not make things easier for yourself? **Sign onto AOL for your free trial today using your CD free with this magazine.**





Buyers' guide

A comprehensive resource covering Internet service providers and the very best Net software and hardware. Compare them all at a glance...

Using this guide

CHOOSING A NEW ISP is never the easiest task in the world, which is why we have trawled the Web to bring you 400 of the top deals currently available in the UK. If you're struggling to decide which type of deal to go for, read the step-by-step guide below, and you should be able to find ISP salvation in a matter of minutes.

Help and advice

If, for whatever reason, this still doesn't provide you with the answer to your ISP dreams, we've gone that little bit further to alleviate your concerns. At the side of every listings page, you'll find a top ISP tip from a *Practical Internet* expert. We don't just name the ISPs, either – we've convinced our team and regular contributors to tell you exactly why they recommend their favourite ISP to you. So, if you can't make up your mind between Pipex and BTOpenworld, read on – we guarantee you'll find the advice helpful and beneficial. More importantly, it should go some small way to helping you make the ISP decision you've been stalling on for months and months...

Which ISP?

With thousands of ISPs all offering great-looking deals, it's tough to find the right service. This guide helps decide which is best for you

BROADBAND: ADSL

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
0800 Dial ADSL	www.0800dial.com	£28.99	£65.00	15	10	Yes
ABC Net ADSL Home 500 Self Install	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£34.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Home 500 Self Install 20:1	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£59.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Home Single User 500 USB	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£34.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office 1000 Self Install	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£94.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office Multi User 1000	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£99.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office Multi User 500	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£69.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
Abel Always Routed1000	www.abelalways.co.uk	£109.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always Routed2000	www.abelalways.co.uk	£135.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always Routed500	www.abelalways.co.uk	£75.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always USB	www.abelalways.co.uk	£25.50	£210.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
ADSL NOW! 1000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£139.77	N/A	0	0	No
ADSL NOW! 500 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£92.77	N/A	0	0	No
ADSL4Home! (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£29.32	£58.69	0	0	No
Albion.net ADSL 1000 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£109.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 2000 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£139.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 500 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£79.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 500 Single	www.albion.co.uk	£39.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Allcomm Home 500	www.allcomm.co.uk	£25.00	£150.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S1000	www.allcomm.co.uk	£120.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S2000	www.allcomm.co.uk	£150.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S500	www.allcomm.co.uk	£85.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Andrews & Arnold Home 500	www.aa.nu	£58.75	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Andrews & Arnold Home 500 Lite (Self-Install)	www.aa.nu	£29.95	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Andrews & Arnold Office 500 (Self-Install)	www.aa.nu	£75.00	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
AOL Broadband (Self Install)	www.aol.co.uk	£27.99	£85.00	7	14	Yes
applica Connect1000	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£99.00	£25.00	50	0	NK
applica Connect500	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£65.00	£25.00	50	0	NK
applica ConnectSolo	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£26.99	£25.00	50	0	NK
Aviators ADSL Home 500	www.aviators.net	£29.00	£199.00	0	0	NK
BISCIT EUSB 500 (Engineer Installed)	www.biscit.com	£23.95	£210.00	0	20	NK

Quick steps to picking your ideal Internet service provider

1 What kind of broadband?

ADSL is currently the fastest-growing connection type in the UK. It relies on you shelling out for BT to 'activate' your line, then paying a monthly subscription. Expect download speeds of up to 60Kb a second with an ADSL line.

CABLE services have been around for longer, and utilise the same kind of technology that powers cable TV into many people's homes. If you live in a cable-enabled area, then you can get anything up to 120Kb a second.

SATELLITE presents the only viable broadband option for people who can't get either ADSL or cable. Costs are high, though, and setting up tends to be very complicated.

2 Can you get it?

Many people can't get ADSL or cable access because it is unavailable in their area. If this is you, take a look at our rundown of unmetered and pay-as-you-go services.

3 Getting speedy help

Worried you'll need your ISP's technical help a lot? Use our guide to find yourself an inexpensive support line.

4 Are you a Quake king?

Net gaming is coming back into the limelight with the increasing popularity of broadband. Most broadband ISPs allow you to game on their time, but check their Web site first to make sure.

5 Building a Web site?

The days when you got a free domain name with every account you set up are long gone, but you can still get your hands on masses of Web space for nothing. Check that your potential provider is generous with free Web space – although 10Mb will be more than enough for most people.

6 Check the mail

Virtually every ISP will offer you at least one POP3 email account when you sign up, but it's worth checking out the small print, especially with new 'no-frills' ADSL services which are designed to give you a basic connection and not much more.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com Net4Nowt

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
BISCIT Home USB 500 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£23.40	£15.00	0	20	NK
BISCIT OFFICE S1000 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£99.95	£28.00	0	50	NK
BISCIT USB S500 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£74.95	£25.00	0	50	Yes
Boltblue Broadband (Self-Install)	www.boltblue.com	£27.99	N/A	5	15	Yes
Breathepro ADSL Connect (Self Install)	www.breathe.com	£25.99	£65.00	25	25	Yes
BT Broadband	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£27.00	£30.00	0	0	No
BTopenworld Business 500 Plug & Go (Self-Install)	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business1000PLUS	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£119.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business500	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	£210.00	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business500PLUS	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£79.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld Home Plug & Go - Line Only (Self-install)	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	N/A	10	50	Yes
BTopenworld home500	www.btopenworld.com/	£29.99	£250.00	10	50	Yes
BTopenworld Home 500 Plug & Go (Self-Install)	www.btopenworld.com/	£29.99	N/A	10	50	Yes
Business Serve 1000 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£87.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve 2000 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£107.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve 500 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£67.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve SOHO Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£29.32	£60.00	0	0	No
CharityDAYS Donate ADSL Home	www.charitydays.net	£30.99	£41.13	Unlimited	250	Yes
Eclipse ADSL Connect 500lite (Self-Install)	www.eclipse.net.uk	£22.75	£25.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
edNET Multi User 500	www.ednet.co.uk	£99.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Multi User 2000	www.ednet.co.uk	£129.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Multi User 1000	www.ednet.co.uk	£199.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Single User 500	www.ednet.co.uk	£29.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
fairADSL (Self-Install)	www.fairadsl.co.uk	£18.99	£33.00	1	0	Yes
Firenet Speedwire 500	www.firenet.uk.net	£26.50	£75.00	Unlimited	10	Yes
Firstnet Single User	www.firstnet.net.uk	£75.00	£65.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
Force9 ADSL 500	www.force9.co.uk	£64.63	£305.50	Unlimited	500	Yes
Force9 ADSL Home	www.force9.co.uk	£22.99	£246.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Home - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£22.99	£41.13	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Netstart	www.force9.co.uk	£47.00	£176.25	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£35.24	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£64.63	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Free-Online ADSL 500	www.free-online.co.uk	£64.63	£305.50	Unlimited	500	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Netstart	www.free-online.co.uk	£47.00	£176.25	Unlimited	500	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.free-online.co.uk	£35.24	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.free-online.co.uk	£64.63	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Freedom2Surf Pure IP 1000 (Self-Install)	www.freedom2surf.net	£95.00	£29.99	20	20	Yes
Freedom2Surf Pure IP 500 (Self-Install)	www.freedom2surf.net	£60.00	£29.99	20	20	Yes
Freeserve Broadband (Self-Install)	www.freeserve.com	£27.99	£84.99	Unlimited	150	Yes
Gconnect Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£110.00	£30.00	1	20	NK
Gconnect Business 2000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£140.00	£30.00	1	20	NK
Gconnect Business 500 Single User (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£29.99	£30	1	20	NK
Gconnect Micro Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£50.00	£30	1	20	NK
Go-Plus Fast (Self-Install)	www.go-plus.net	£25.00	£60.00	Unlimited	10	Yes
Inweb Home 500 (Self-Install)	www.inweb.net.uk	£28.99	£76.38	Unlimited	10	Yes
Jings 500U PLUS	www.jings.com	£59.99	£180.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
Jolt Home500 Lite (Self Install)	www.jolt.co.uk	£22.99	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Jolt Office500 (Self Install)	www.jolt.co.uk	£29.99	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Kingston Karoo RapidTime Pro	www.kingstonbiz.net	£38.99	£150.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
MacAce AlwaysOn@Home ADSL500 (Self-Install)	www.macace.net	£29.99	£58.75	5	0	No
Madasafish Dazzle 500U 24	www.madasafish.com	£55.95	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
Madasafish Dazzle 500U PLUS	www.madasafish.com	£59.99	£180.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
Mailbox Business Connect 500	www.mailbox.net.uk	£75.00	£135.00	10	25	Yes
Mailbox BusinessWire 500 (Self-Install)	www.mailbox.net.uk	£75.00	£30.00	10	25	Yes
Mailbox Standard Connect 500	www.mailbox.net.uk	£34.08	£30.00	10	25	Yes
MetroNet 500	www.metronet.co.uk	£35.99	£176.25	5	20	Yes
MetroNet S500	www.metronet.co.uk	£186.83	£305.50	50	20	Yes
MetroNet S1000	www.metronet.co.uk	£186.83	£305.50	50	20	Yes
Netscalibur SoHo 500 (Self Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£34.08	£64.63	Unlimited	20	Yes
Netscalibur Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£158.63	£323.13	Unlimited	20	Yes
Netscalibur Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£116.33	£323.13	Unlimited	20	Yes
NewNet Business 1000 (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£92.00	£25.00	Unlimited	125	Yes
NewNet Business 500 (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£61.00	£25.00	Unlimited	125	Yes
NewNet Business 500 PLUS	www.newnet.co.uk	£88.13	£305.50	Unlimited	100	Yes
NewNet Home 500 M (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£32.00	£25.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
NewNet Home 500 N (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£24.00	£25.00	5	0	Yes
NewNet Home 500 S (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£27.00	£25.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
OneTel Unplugged 500 Plug & Play (Self-Install)	www.onetel.co.uk	£27.99	£60.00	1	0	No
Onyx Business Broadband Silver (Self-Install)	www.onyx-adsl.net	£82.25	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
Onyx Home Office Broadband (Self-Install)	www.onyx-adsl.net	£29.99	N/A	Unlimited	0	Yes
Pipemedia USB 512K	www.adsl.uk.net	£57.58	£235.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
PIPEX Business 500	www.pipex.com	£82.19	£323.13	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£76.32	£70.50	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Home Office (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£29.32	£70.50	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Solo (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£23.44	£58.75	12	50	Yes
PlusNet ADSL 500	www.plus.net	£88.13	£152.75	Unlimited	500	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Home	www.plus.net	£22.99	£246.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
PlusNet ADSL 1000	www.plus.net	£129.25	£152.75	Unlimited	500	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Netstart	www.plus.net	£246.75	£35.24	Unlimited	250	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Home Surf - Self Install	www.plus.net	£19.99	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.plus.net	£35.24	£29.38	Unlimited	250	Yes

ISP TOP PICK

NAME.....Thomas Watson
POSITION.....Editor
ISP.....BTOpenworld Broadband (www.btopenworld.com)

After signing up for BTOpenworld Broadband, I had to wait a while to have my account activated – but this was as much to do with my circumstances as anything else. When the service finally kicked in, I was pleasantly surprised. In the six months I've been using the service, my BTOpenworld account has connected to the Net on the first attempt every time. Some 50:1 deals seem to grind to a halt during busy times, but I've been able to download at a steady 60Kb a second no matter when I connect.

The only slight gripe I've had with the service was when I couldn't connect one Sunday. I tried repeatedly to get in touch with the technical helpline, but I kept being disconnected after being put on hold for six minutes. Thankfully, I quickly realised that there was nothing wrong with the broadband – it turned out that my Fujitsu modem had given up the ghost after being bullied into submission by my extravagant download demands!

I would recommend BTOpenworld to anyone – it's one of the most stable and fastest connections around, and the free spam blocking is a bonus as well.

It's one of the biggest ISPs in the UK, and BTOpenworld offers a damn fine ADSL service for a reasonable price

The verdict

Speed: ★★★★★
Connection stability: ★★★★★
Technical support: ★★★½☆
Value for money: ★★★★½

"BTOpenworld broadband is one of the fastest and most stable services around"

OVERALL 90%

Buyers' guide

Which ISP?

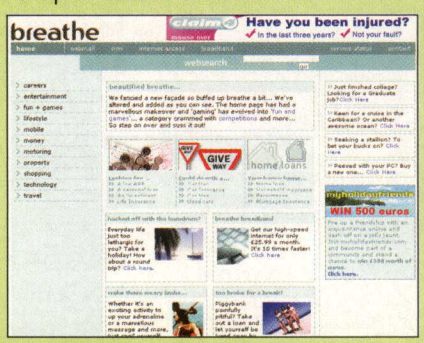
ISP TOP PICK

NAME.....James Thornton
POSITION.....Features Editor
ISP.....Breathe Anywhere (www.breathe.com)

After trying out a few different ISPs in the last few months, I'm now connected to the Net via Breathe Anywhere. I had a shot at UK Online's OpenSurf unmetered service earlier in the year, and while I found it pretty reliable, I decided I wasn't using the Net at home enough for me to justify the £13.99 fee I was paying for the service. After all, I'm beavering away on the Net all day in the office, so the last thing I want to do when I get home is stare at Web sites.

As a result, I decided to plump for Breathe's Anywhere service, where I only pay for the Internet call charges. Since then I haven't looked back, as I now only end up spending about a fiver a month on Net access, which means I can treat myself to an extra couple of coals on the fire during the winter months.

In terms of reliability, I've experienced very few problems with the service, though the email server did go down a couple of weeks ago which caused me a few problems. Having said that, the technical support department was very friendly and on the ball when I rang the helpline, which is great considering it's only charged at local rates, unlike some other ISPs I've been with which have premium rate numbers.



Unmetered access may offer the best option for some people, but many are better off with a standard 0845 account

The verdict

Speed: ★★★½☆
Connection stability: ★★★★½
Technical support: ★★★★½
Value for money: ★★★★½

"The technical support department is very friendly, even though it's only local rate"

OVERALL 84%

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
PlusNet ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.plus.net	£64.63	£29.38	Unlimited	500	Yes
Poptel Home Office Basic 500	www.poptel.coop	£41.07	£293.69	5	10	Yes
Poptel Home User Basic 500	www.poptel.coop	£35.19	£176.19	5	10	Yes
Poptel Office Standard 500	www.poptel.coop	£92.83	£305.50	5	10	Yes
Scotland4me	www.scotland4me.net	£29.38	£70.50	Unlimited	50	No
Silvermead Broadband (Self-Install)	www.silvermead.net	£28.99	£65.00	15	10	Yes
Sniff Out DreamTime (Self-Install)	www.sniffout.net	£23.49	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Sonnet Internet Office 1000 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£105.75	£70.50	500	250	Yes
Sonnet Internet Office 500 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£76.38	£70.50	500	250	Yes
Sonnet Internet Professional 500 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£29.38	£70.50	500	100	Yes
Star - Broad Star Remote	www.star.net.uk	£70.50	£293.75	0	0	No
Supanet - 0512Kbps	www.supanet.com	£29.99	£119.99	Unlimited	20	Yes
Timewarp ADSL Home User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£29.99	£58.75	1	10	Yes
Timewarp ADSL Online User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£28.20	£58.75	1	10	Yes
Timewarp ADSL SOHO User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£40.00	£58.75	3	20	Yes
Timewarp Office 500 (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£94.00	£58.75	3	50	Yes
Tiscali Broadband (Self-Install)	www.tiscali.co.uk	£19.99	£50.00	6	100	Yes
Tiscali Broadband Plus (Self-Install)	www.tiscali.co.uk	£27.99	N/A	6	100	Yes
Tiscali T500	www.tiscali.co.uk	£89.29	£305.50	Unlimited	50	Yes
UTV Clicksilver Business	u.tv	£35.25	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
UTV Clicksilver Residential	u.tv	£27.50	£49.50	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£64.63	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Home User (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£19.99	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£105.75	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 2000 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£159.25	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
VIA NETWORKS United Kingdom Basic 500 (Self-Install)	www.vianetworks.co.uk	£82.25	£58.75	30	50	Yes
Virgin.net Broadband (Self-Install)	www.virgin.net	£24.99	£39.99	5	10	Yes
Vispa Home 500 (Self-Install)	www.vispa.net	£28.99	£58.75	Unlimited	15	Yes
Vulture Capital ADSL Connect (Self-Install)	www.vcisp.net	£25.99	£65.00	25	25	Yes
ZenADSL Home (Self-Install)	www.zenadsl.com	£25.52	£25.00	5	50	Yes
ZenADSL Multi-User 512Kbps	www.zenadsl.com	£76.38	£305.50	5	50	Yes
ZenADSL Single-User 512Kbps	www.zenadsl.com	£29.99	£176.25	5	50	Yes
ZeNOC GamesStream 512	www.zenoc.net	£55.00	£100.00	5	20	Yes
ZeNOC WorkStream 512	www.zenoc.net	£115.00	£300.00	5	20	Yes

BROADBAND: CABLE

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
blueyonder broadband 1Mb	info.blueyonder.co.uk/	£39.99	£50.00	15	30	Yes
Blueyonder broadband 500	info.blueyonder.co.uk/	£29.99	£50.00	15	30	Yes
NTL 128K	www.ntl.co.uk	£14.99	£25.00	15	55	Yes
NTL 1Mb	www.ntl.co.uk	£49.99	N/A	15	55	Yes
NTL 600K	www.ntl.co.uk	£24.99	N/A	15	55	Yes

BROADBAND: SATELLITE

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
Bentley Walker Bronze Surfer	www.bentleywalker.com	£75.00	£100.00	0	0	No
BTopenworld Business Satellite 500/1	www.btopenworld.com/	£70.49	£1,056.33	20	20	Yes
BTopenworld Business Satellite 500/4	www.btopenworld.com/	£129.24	£1,526.33	100	20	Yes
Europe Online	www.europeonline.com	£6.36	N/A	5	0	Yes
HSIViaSat Home Edition	www.hsiviasat.com	£29.07	N/A	0	0	No
Mac-1 Internet USB Bronze	www.mac-1.com	£182.13	N/A	0	0	No
SatDrive	www.satdrive.com	£14.99	£399.00	0	0	No
Silvermead Satellite Broadband	www.silvermead.net	£34.99	£49.99	15	10	Yes
Skystorm	www.skystorm.net	£17.63	N/A	0	0	No
Starspeeder	www.starspeeder.co.uk	£17.63	N/A	0	0	No
Xantic	www.xanticbroadband.com	£29.38	£180.95	0	0	No

BROADBAND: WIRELESS

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
IAP Broadband	www.iap.uk.net	£29.99	£150.00	10	10	Yes
IAP Broadband X2	www.iap.uk.net	£39.99	£150.00	10	10	Yes
IAP Unmetered	www.iap.uk.net	£11.99	£150.00	5	5	Yes
IAP Unmetered X2	www.iap.uk.net	£19.99	£150.00	5	5	Yes
Liberty Broadband (business)	www.libertybroadband.co.uk	£111.61	£175.08	Unlimited	20	Yes
Liberty Broadband (consumer)	www.libertybroadband.co.uk	£46.99	£175.08	10	20	Yes

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0845 INTERNET PROVIDERS

NAME	URL	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	V90	K64	K128
Abel GRATIS Plus	www.abelgratis.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
BlueCarrots Anywhere	www.bluecarrots.com	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
blueyonder	www.blueyonder.co.uk	15	30	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breathepro Easyconnect	www.breathe.com	25	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
British Library Net	www.britishlibrary.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
BT Access	www.btclickforbusiness.com	10	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
CharityDAYS Donate At Home Free	www.charitydays.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
CharityDAYS Donate At Work Free	www.charitydays.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chilly Hippo	www.chilly-hippo.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
ClaraNET	www.clara.net	Unlimited	10	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clearsignals	www.clearsignals.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Club 24 Internet	www.club24.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dabs netdial	www.dabs.net	25	25	No	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Dabsol	www.dabs.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Demon Express Total (Self-Install)	www.demon.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Local Rate	NK	Yes	Yes
Devilnet United Kingdom	www.devilnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
EidosNet	www.eidosnet.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
E-Plus	www.e-plus.co.uk	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Euphony.net	www.euphony.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Everywhere Broadband	www.everywherebroadband.com	10	20	Yes	NK	NK	Yes	Yes
Fasthosts LoCall	dial.fasthosts.co.uk	Unlimited	200	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	No
Firenet	www.firenet.uk.net	15	10	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Flyer Internet	internet.flyer.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Force9 Business Free	www.force9.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Force9 Free	www.force9.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free United Kingdom	www.freeuk.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Freebeeb	www.beeb.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	Yes	No
Freedom 2 Surf	www.freedom2surf.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeNEasy	www.freeneasy.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeNet	www.freenet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Freenetname	www.freenetname.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
Freeola.net	www.freeola.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free-Online Business Free	www.free-online.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free-Online Free	www.free-online.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Freeserve NoTies	www.freeserve.com	Unlimited	150	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
FreeUnited Kingdom	www.freeuk.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Freewire	www.freewire.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeZone	www.freezone.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Games Terminal	www.gterminal.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	National Rate	Yes	No	No
Go There Internet	www.gothere.uk.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
GoFree	www.gofree.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Go-Legend	www.go-legend.net	Unlimited	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
GPAnet	www.gpanet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hot-Toast	www.hot-toast.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
i12	www.i12.com	Unlimited	500	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
IofM.net	www.iofm.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
IXUnited Kingdom	www.ixuk.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
JellyPeople.com	www.jellypeople.com	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Loyal Mail	www.loyalmail.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	No
MacUnlimited	www.macunlimited.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mersinet	www.mersinet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Messages	www.messages.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Ministry of Sound	www.ministryofsound.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
MWfree.net	www.mwfree.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
MyETI	www.eti.uk.com	Unlimited	15	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
NASCR	www.nascr.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
NetDirect Online	www.instant.ndo.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
One Way Internet - PAYG	www.onewayinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	100	No	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Onet	www.onet.co.uk	Unlimited	30	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
OnlineServe Dial Lite	www.onlineserve.co.uk	Unlimited	10	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oxfree	www.oxfree.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
PlusNet Business Free	www.plus.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
PlusNet Free	www.plus.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prontoserve	www.Prontoserve.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	No	Yes	Yes
Qadisho	www.qadisho.com	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Rapidial	www.Rapidial.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
RugbyWeb	www.rugbyweb.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
Sniff Out Classic	www.sniffout.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sonnet Internet Just Dial	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
South West Net	www.swest.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Sparticus.net	www.sparticus.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Supanet Classic	www.supanet.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
SurfAnytime	www.surfanytime.co.uk	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Tellnet	www.tellnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tiscali Pay As You Go	www.tiscali.co.uk	Unlimited	100	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Vispa Connect Valuetime	www.vispa.net	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vulture Capital Easy Connect	www.vcisp.net	25	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Waitrose.com	www.waitrose.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	No

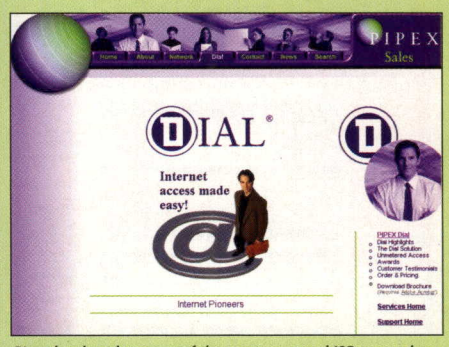
ISP TOP PICK

NAME.....Danny McAleer
POSITION.....Contributor
ISP.....Pipex Dial (www.dial.pipex.com)

I use Pipex Dial, and just a dial-up account. I'm by no means an ISP snob, though. I was fortunate enough to be in this journalism malarkey way back when Pipex Dial first started in the UK and I got a complimentary account for life because the magazine I was working on put a 30-day trial on its cover CD-ROM. It might not be the best, but it's free, so I've never really had an incentive to change :)

It must be said though, that I've never actually been tempted to go elsewhere, even when the whole 0800 access came out, since Pipex does all I want, and has oodles of cool newsgroups. It's only recently, now broadband is so cheap, that I might change. But then again, Pipex does broadband, and it's about the same price as everywhere else...

I would also say that Pipex's NetMail service, where you can pick up your emails using a Web browser, is fantastic. It's recently been totally re-programmed and is a vast improvement on the old job. Also, the Web space and free public CGI scripts provided for things like form-mails, counters, and password protected areas are pretty smart.



Pipex has long been one of the most respected ISPs around, so it's hardly surprising that people stick with it for so long

The verdict

Speed: ★★★½☆
Connection stability: ★★★★½
Technical support: ★★★★½
Value for money: ★★★★½

"I've never been tempted to change, even when 0800 access came out"

OVERALL 87%

Buyers' guide

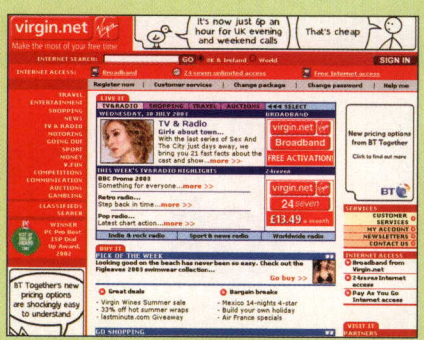
Which ISP?

ISP TOP PICK

NAME.....Mark Billen
POSITION.....Staff Writer
ISP.....Virgin.net (www.virgin.net)

It seems as though I've been with my ISP, Virgin.net, since the dawn of time. Unfortunately I probably wouldn't put this down to being unable to resist their unsurpassed service, but more to do with habit. When I did sign up with them I was at school doing my A levels and needed the cheapest service I could get. Virgin appeared to be that, and not long after my loyalty to them was rewarded with free access.

I've never done all the benchmarking tests or consulted any industry statistics, but have always found them to be good. Considering that my PC is an antique running an embarrassing dial-up connection, I can't complain. Logging on to their servers is consistently successful, while unexpected hang-ups are very rare. They also offer an intuitive and helpful support site, with a generous amount of server space that I use for my own site. Email again has been efficient, and it's been important for me to keep the same address all this time. However, I am beginning to suffer the frustration of spam and pop-ups to the point where change is inevitable. Hopefully I can ditch the relic for a new broadband powered setup very soon.



ISPs come and go, but many of us have been with the same one since we first ventured onto the Internet

The verdict

Speed: ★★★½☆

Connection stability: ★★★★½

Technical support: ★★★★½

Value for money: ★★★★½

"Considering my PC is an antique running a dialup connection, I can't complain"

OVERALL 87%

UNMETERED INTERNET PROVIDERS

ISP	URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQ	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS
0800Dial Home User	www.0800dial.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
0800onlineserve	www.0800.onlineserve.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	10	Yes	Free
1066ad.com Maxi Surf	www.1066ad.com	£14.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
1066ad.com Mini Surf	www.1066ad.com	£10.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
123ISP Standard	www.123isp.co.uk	£13.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
123ISP Twilight	www.123isp.co.uk	£4.95	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
123ISP Twin Lite	www.123isp.co.uk	£18.95	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
24-7Freecall	www.24-7freecall.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
4theNET Business Anytime	www.4thenet.co.uk	£23.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNet Unlimited 24/7	www.4thenet.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNET Unlimited Daytime	www.4thenet.co.uk	£4.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNET Unlimited Off-peak	www.4thenet.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Abel DIAL Anytime	www.abelalways.co.uk	£27.99	No	No	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium – 25p
Abel DIAL Leisuretime	www.abelalways.co.uk	£11.99	No	No	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium – 25p
AOL	www.aol.co.uk	£15.99	No	No	7	14	Yes	Free
Arsenal AnyTime	www.arsenal.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Arsenal Hometime	www.arsenal.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Asian Biz BusinessTime	www.asian-biz.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Asian Biz HomeTime	www.asian-biz.net	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Asian Biz SurfTime Evenings & Weekends	www.asian-biz.net	£13.00	No	Yes	15	10	Yes	National Rate
Barclaycard.net	www.barclaycard.net	£12.95	Yes	Yes	5	20	Yes	Premium – 50p
BlueCarrots At Home	www.bluecarrots.com	£8.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
BlueCarrots Unlimited	www.bluecarrots.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Blueyonder SurfUnlimited	www.blueyonder.co.uk	£12.00	No	No	15	30	Yes	Premium – 50p
Boltblue Anytime	www.boltblue.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	National Rate
Breathe At Home	www.breathe.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathe Plus	www.breathe.com	£19.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathe Unlimited	www.breathe.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathepro Connect	www.breathe.com	£15.99	Yes	Yes	25	25	Yes	Local Rate
BT Connect Lite Anytime	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£17.63	Yes	Yes	20	20	Yes	Premium – 50p
BTopenworld Anytime	www.btopenworld.com	£15.99	Yes	Yes	10	50	Yes	Free
BTopenworld for BT Surf	www.btopenworld.com	£12.99	No	Yes	5	10	Yes	Free
Business Unmetered Business User	www.business-unmetered.com	£15.26	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Business Unmetered Business User 24	www.business-unmetered.com	£21.14	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Chalkface Anytime	www.chalkface.net	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
CharityDAYS Donate At Work Lite	www.charitydays.net	£29.36	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
CharityDAYS Donate Surf Lite	www.charitydays.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
CharityDAYS Donate Surf Standard	www.charitydays.net	£16.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime 12	www.clara.net	£4.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime 35	www.clara.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime 80	www.clara.net	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime AnyTime	www.clara.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET Freetime Anytime Business	www.clara.net	£24.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime Unlimited	www.clara.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
Dabs netinfinity	www.dabs.net	£15.99	Yes	Yes	25	25	No	Local Rate
Datanet SurfTime Off-Peak	www.datadsl.co.uk	£16.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	0	Yes	Premium – £1.00
Demon Premier Connect	www.demon.net	£18.75	No	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	Local Rate
dmc:dial surf:access	www.dmcdial.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
dmc:dial surf:biz	www.dmcdial.com	£23.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
dmc:dial surf:lite	www.dmcdial.com	£7.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Fast24 Alltime	www.fast24.co.uk	£15.00	Yes	Yes	20	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Fast24 Anytime	www.fast24.co.uk	£10.00	Yes	Yes	20	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Fast24 Daytime	www.fast24.co.uk	£11.00	Yes	Yes	20	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Fast24 Off Peak	www.fast24.co.uk	£7.00	Yes	Yes	20	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Fast4 Unlimited	www.fast4.net	£6.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	0	Yes	National Rate
Fasthosts FreeCall Home	dial.fasthosts.co.uk	£17.61	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	200	Yes	Standard BT
Firenet Anytime	www.firenet.uk.net	£11.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	National Rate
Force9 Connect Biz	www.force9.co.uk	£39.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
Force9 Connect BizLite	www.force9.co.uk	£19.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
Force9 Connect Heavy	www.force9.co.uk	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Force9 Connect Lite	www.force9.co.uk	£8.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Force9 Connect Standard	www.force9.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Biz	www.free-online.co.uk	£39.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect BizLite	www.free-online.co.uk	£19.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Heavy	www.free-online.co.uk	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Lite	www.free-online.co.uk	£8.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Standard	www.free-online.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Free24-7	www.free24-7.net	£7.99	Yes	Yes	0	0	Yes	National Rate
Freechariot FC Business Unlimited	www.freechariot.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freechariot FC Home Lite	www.freechariot.co.uk	£5.75	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freechariot FC Home Off-Peak	www.freechariot.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freechariot FC Universal 24/7	www.freechariot.co.uk	£16.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freechariot FC Unlimited	www.freechariot.co.uk	£13.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freedom2Surf Anytime	www.freedom2surf.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	Standard BT
Freeserve Anytime	www.freeserve.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	150	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freeserve HomeTime	www.freeserve.com	£12.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	150	Yes	Premium – 50p
Games-World	www.games-world.net	£19.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	National Rate
Gconnect Anytime 64K	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£19.98	NK	No	1	20	NK	National Rate

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ISP	URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQ	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS
GlenWorld	www.glen-world.co.uk	£14.95	Unk	Yes	0	0	Unk	N/A
Go-Plus	www.go-plus.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	10	Yes	Premium – 75p
ic24 Office Hours	www.ic24.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	1	0	No	Premium – 50p
Jings	www.jings.com	£14.99	Yes	Yes	1	10	No	Premium – 50p
Jolt Anytime	www.jolt.co.uk	£24.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	No	N/A
MacAce BusinessDaytime	www.macace.net	£29.38	Yes	Yes	5	0	No	National Rate
MacAce Homefree	www.macace.net	£12.00	Yes	Yes	5	0	No	National Rate
MacAce Homefree24	www.macace.net	£16.00	Yes	Yes	5	0	No	National Rate
Madasafish	www.madasafish.com	£14.99	Yes	Yes	1	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
nStream	www.nstream.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	5	25	No	Standard BT
NTL world	www.ntl.co.uk	£10.00	No	No	15	55	Yes	Free
One Way Internet	www.onewayinternet.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	100	Yes	Premium – 25p
OneTel	www.onetel.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	3	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Pipex DialTime Dedicated 1 Weekdays	www.pipex.com/	£70.21	Yes	Yes	12	50	Yes	National Rate
Pipex DialTime Shared 3	www.pipex.com/	£46.71	Yes	Yes	12	50	Yes	National Rate
Pipex DialTime Shared 5	www.pipex.com/	£34.96	Yes	Yes	12	50	Yes	National Rate
Pipex DialTime Shared Evening & w/e	www.pipex.com/	£23.21	Yes	Yes	12	50	Yes	National Rate
PlusNet Connect Biz	www.plus.net	£39.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Biz Lite	www.plus.net	£19.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Heavy User	www.plus.net	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Lite User	www.plus.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Standard	www.plus.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Powergen Anytime	www.pgen.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Powergen Daytime	www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Powergen Evenings & Weekends	www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Qadisho Business Unlimited	www.qadisho.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Qadisho Home Lite	www.qadisho.com	£5.75	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Qadisho Home Off-Peak	www.qadisho.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Qadisho Universal	www.qadisho.com	£16.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Qadisho Unlimited	www.qadisho.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Quicksurfer Anytime	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Quicksurfer Business	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£15.00	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Quicksurfer Business Plus	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£23.50	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Quicksurfer Daytime	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£8.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Quicksurfer Evenings & Weekends	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£7.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
Quicksurfer Evenings & Weekends	www.quicksurfer.co.uk	£7.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
SafariConnect Anytime	www.safariconnect.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
SafariConnect Home&Away	www.safariconnect.com	£19.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
Silvermead Business Unlimited	www.silvermead.net	£12.91	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	National Rate
Silvermead Off-Peak	www.silvermead.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	National Rate
Silvermead Unlimited @ Home	www.silvermead.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	National Rate
SniffOut PeakTime	www.sniffout.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Local Rate
SniffOut SmartTime	www.sniffout.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium – 50p
SniffOut TimeOut	www.sniffout.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium – 50p
Sonnet Internet Solo 24/7	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£29.38	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
Sonnet Internet SoloLite 24/7	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£17.63	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate
Southgrove Business 24/7	www.southgrove.com	£24.99	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
Southgrove Business Daytime	www.southgrove.com	£16.50	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
Southgrove Surfer+	www.southgrove.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
Southgrove Surfer+ 24/7	www.southgrove.com	£14.99	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
Southgrove Twilight Surfer	www.southgrove.com	£5.95	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
SupaNet Supahighway	www.supanet.com	£14.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Tesco.net Daytime	www.tesco.net	£5.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Vispa Connect Anytime	www.vispa.net	£14.95	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate
Vispa Connect Anytime Plus	www.vispa.net	£29.95	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate
Vispa Connect Hometime Lite	www.vispa.net	£13.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate

ISP TOP PICK

NAME.....Alex Waddington
POSITION.....Contributor
ISP.....OneTel Broadband (www.onetel.co.uk)

I currently use OneTel Broadband, although I shall probably be changing next month once my contract is up. I got a great offer when I joined – free modem and connection and then £27.99 a month. The service itself is pretty good, but the tech support does leave a lot to be desired. There are so many different lines to ring for different things, it's really hard to get problems sorted quickly.

At one point this year, my account was mysteriously terminated for no reason, and this took ages to sort out. It also took me a month to sort out a connection problem (ie I couldn't connect) when I first joined, and my attempts to get the first month's fee refunded were futile. So it's a good fast service when it's working, but terrible customer service.

As a backup I have Freeserve Anytime, which I have been using for three years with no problems. I can't think of a single time when the line has been busy or the connection speeds have dropped much below 53Kbps. I would definitely recommend Freeserve to a beginner, as it offers very good free online and email support. Freeserve also keeps you well informed of latest developments and changes to the service you're paying for.

Freebies are always a key incentive to sign up for a particular ISP. OneTel's free modem and activation certainly worked

The verdict

Speed: ★★★★☆
Connection stability: ★★★★☆
Technical support: ★★☆☆☆
Value for money: ★★★★☆

"It took me a month to sort out a connection problem when I first joined"

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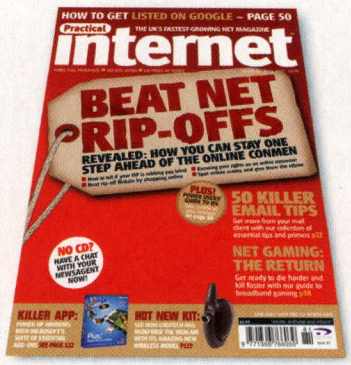
HOW TO GET LISTED ON GOOGLE – PAGE 50
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50 KILLER EMAIL TIPS
NET GAMING: THE RETURN
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KILLER APP:
HOT NEW KIT:

Issue 81

Beat the con merchants with our advice on how to stop your ISP robbing you blind, beat rip-off Britain and more. We blow the lid on the online gaming craze, and reveal the 50 email tips you must follow.

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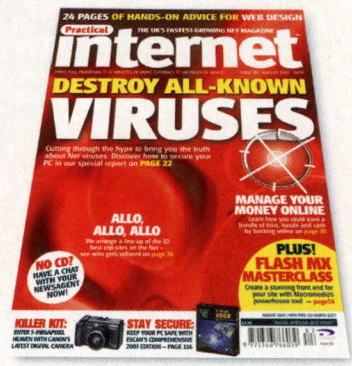

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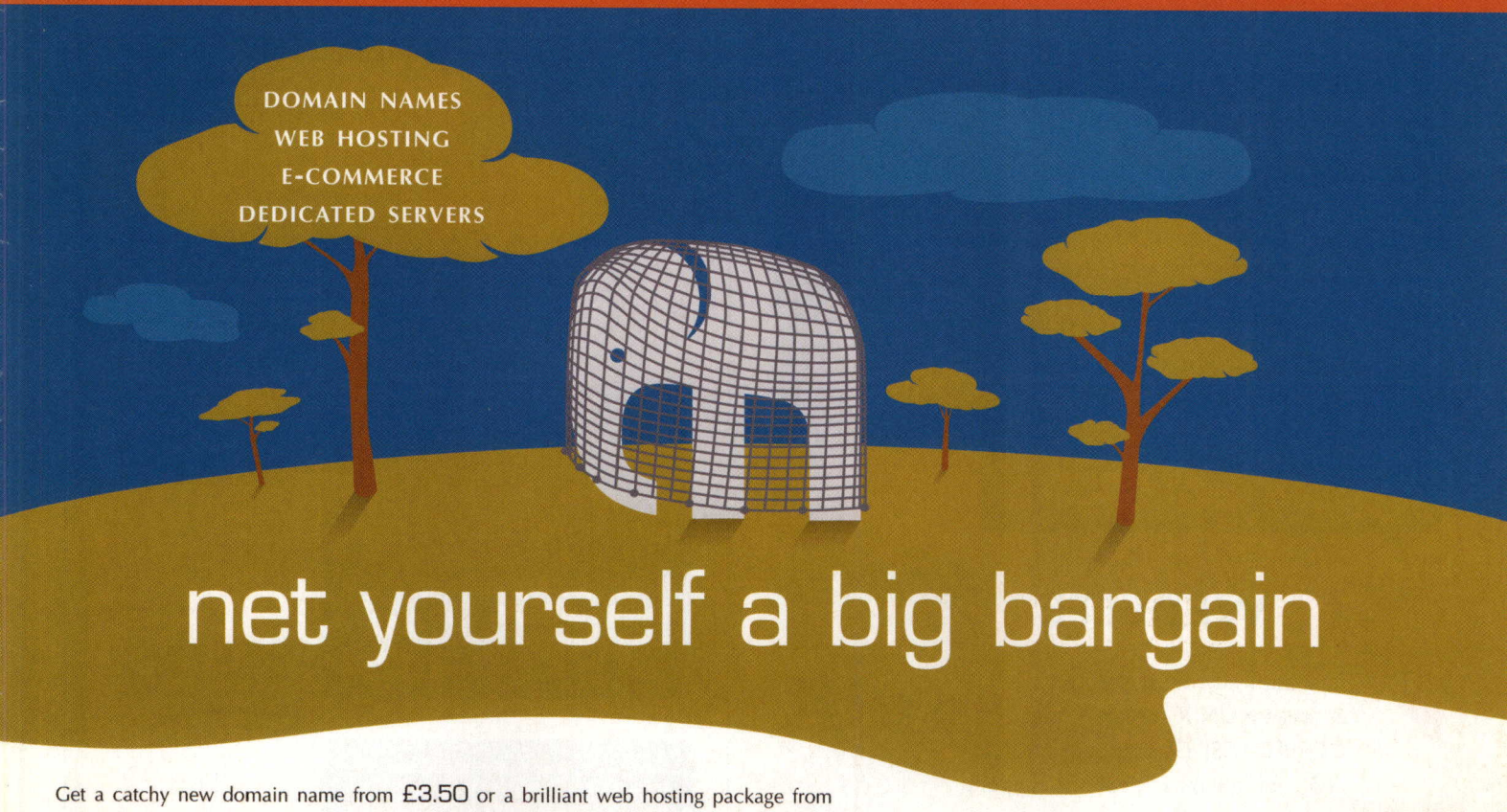

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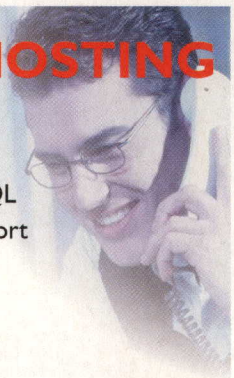

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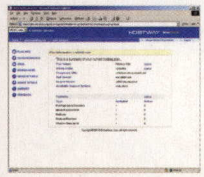

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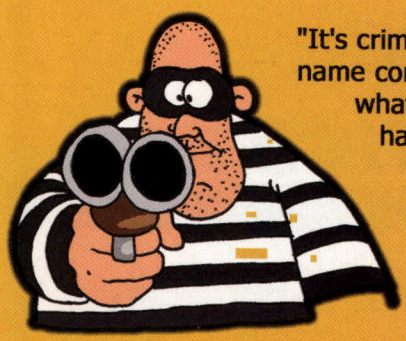

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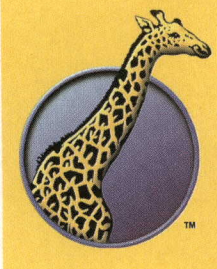

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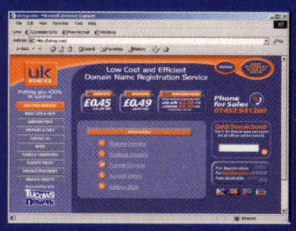

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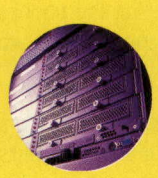

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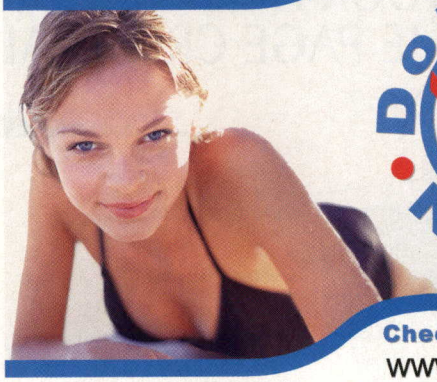

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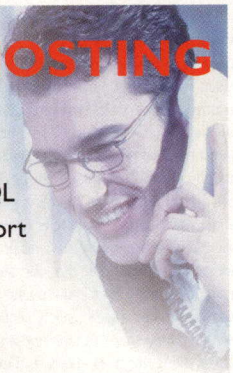

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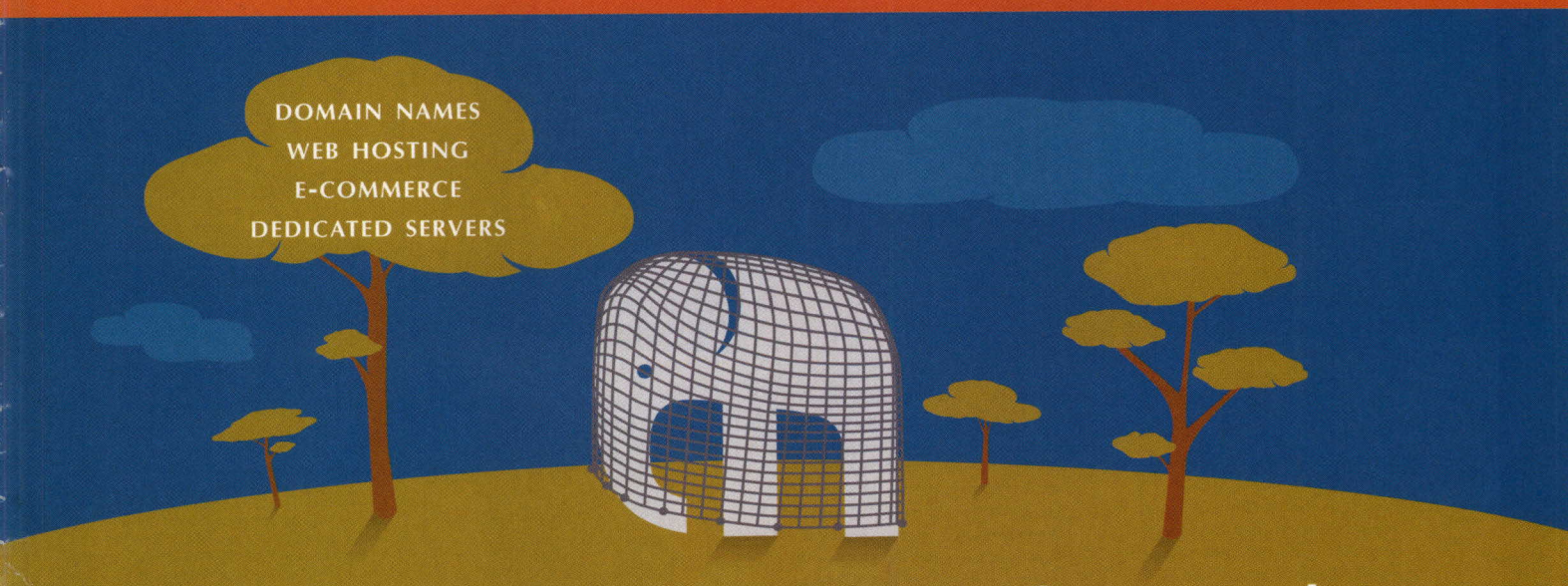

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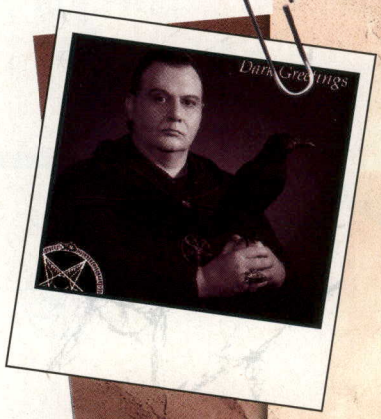


Name:
JOHN D. ALLEE OR 'LORD EGAN'

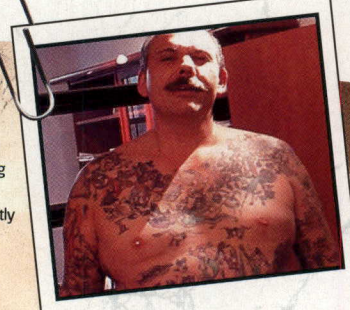
Last seen at:
www.churchofsatan.org

Wanted for:
This is pretty self-explanatory really, unless you consider being the head of a Satanic cult to be standard stuff. You frankly don't know whether to laugh or cry when bumping into a URL like this – and then it hits you that the proprietor is deadly serious. John D. Allee is basically a high priest for the church of Mr Lucifer, and expert in the art of 'Zen Paganism'. It's a firm bet that he's from the American Deep South too, where donning black robes and stuffed crows is possibly the norm. Personally we're too frightened of incurring the devil's wrath to criticise our man, so fair play. No sorry, can't do it – he's buddies with Beelzebub for goodness sake!

Characteristics:
Apart from the weirdo dress sense, John looks relatively normal. Okay, his slicked-back hairdo is somewhat severe and he is slightly podgy, but you'd expect that from a man eating for two. However, he does allude to his struggle in killing off sinister alter ego 'Lord Egan', and with few sports willing to tolerate his demonic attire, we'll cut him some slack. Unfortunately the same can't be said of some tittle-tattlers, who've been muttering about John's outside activities. He denies many of the charges made against him, some of which would have you spluttering out your tea in astonishment.

Significant others:
For all you girls who reckon our John's your cup of tea, you're mental, but he is actually spoken for. Yes, he's currently dating a pagan witch called Lillee, apparently. Well it was never going to be a librarian was it? So we can only imagine the conversations. He's something of a romantic though – although Lillee's not a Satanist he does respect her 'magical and mundane abilities'. Mundane abilities? That's a bit chauvinist isn't it? Mind you, she is a witch, so this could refer to her doing the weekly shop by bus and not broomstick. Aside from all that, the site has an online store for all your pagan needs, and there's a great gallery section. There are family snaps of John and his disciples doing things on altars, and even an anecdote about a parishioner requesting the 'Miami Vice' theme during a ritual! Happy days.

Quote:
"May our Dark Lord shed his infernal blessings upon you"



Name:
GEORGE REIGER OR 'THE DISNEY TATTOO GUY'

Last seen at:
www.disneytattooguy.com

Wanted for:
Just go to the site and you'll see why. This is probably so far removed from Satanism it's off the opposite end of the bizarre scale. It's fine to have interests, hobbies or even healthy obsessions, but is there ever a reasonable excuse for turning your home into a shrine and daubing yourself in tattoos? George Reiger claims to be Disney's number one fan, and this proud home page shows why. The bulk of it centres on photos of George's insanely decorated quarters, and then a few of his house! You just wonder what someone would need to do to snatch the guy's obsessive crown. Short of wedding a thawed-out Uncle Walt or grafting on Mickey ears, forget it.

Characteristics:
Where on earth do you begin here? The man is a walking billboard for all things MGM, so you're not likely to miss him. George must be due a reward card at his local tattoo parlour after spending $99,000 on work to his legs, shoulders, back and chest. He's literally covered up to the neck in classic scenes from *Snow White* or, more aptly, *Dumbo*. If he moved quickly enough, like some demented human flipbook, you could effectively watch a silent version of *Fantasia* – it's that bad. He then delights in announcing that he's the only person worldwide to have 1,501 of the things. Can that honestly be a surprise George?

Significant Others:
Let's hope not, for the sake of anyone who would have to live in that house. Apart from being murder to keep clean, it looks like the museum that time forgot. It's actually a beautiful property underneath, and the tragedy is that you can almost hear it screaming for help. There's a Mickey Mouse-themed bar area, souvenir-laden kitchen and the craziest lounge known to man. In the garden you'll find studio props, a Mickey pond that looks more like a chipmunk and part of a Disneyland amusement ride. It's sobering stuff, but is only compounded by his apparent notoriety in the US. Sojourns on talk and news shows are frequent, while galleries of George accosting twitchy celebs teeter on the disturbing.

Quote:
"I know it's odd for a 44-year-old man to be this devoted to Disney – it just makes me happy"

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Our Web Builder allows you to create an attractive and compelling website. Choose from thousands of templates and designs and then simply point and click to create your site. Web Builder creates stunning websites in minutes with no technical knowledge required!

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